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NATAL SERMONS.

NATAL SERMONS.

NATAL SERMONS.

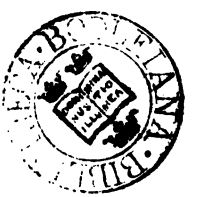
A SERIES OF DISCOURSES

PREACHED IN

THE CATHEDRAL CHURCH OF ST PETER'S,
MARITZBURG.

BY THE

RIGHT REV. JOHN WILLIAM COLENSO, D.D.,
BISHOP OF NATAL.



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TO

THE MEMBERS

OF THE

UNITED CHURCH OF ENGLAND AND IRELAND,

IN THE

CITY OF PIÈTER-MARITZBURG,

AND IN

THE DIOCESE OF NATAL,

THESE DISCOURSES,

PREACHED IN THE HEARING OF MANY OF THEM,

WITHIN THE CATHEDRAL CHURCH,

ARE DEDICATED

BY THEIR AFFECTIONATE FRIEND

AND CHIEF PASTOR,

J. W. NATAL.

PREFACE.

THESE Sermons, preached in the Cathedral Church of my Diocese to large and attentive congregations, have not been written upon any set plan or system; but have been composed from week to week, upon subjects suggested either by texts occurring in the services of the day, or by some train of thought into which I had already been led by a previous Sermon.

I have been compelled by the peculiar circumstances under which I returned to my Diocese, to deal with some of these subjects in a more controversial manner than I should otherwise have deemed best suited to the needs of my flock.

The Sermons have been printed in the colony, separately, as delivered, in accordance with the wish expressed by many of those who heard them, for circulation among their fellow-Churchmen and others, in Natal and in other parts of South Africa. Should it be thought desirable to republish them in England in a collected form, I have given permission to that effect.

J. W. NATAL.

BISHOPSTOWE, NATAL,
March 1, 1866.

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SERMONS.

I.

LOVE ABOUNDING IN KNOWLEDGE AND JUDGMENT.

PREACHED ON SUNDAY MORNING, NOV. 12, 1865, AT ST PAUL'S, DURBAN, AND ON SUNDAY MORNING, NOV. 19, 1865, IN THE CATHEDRAL, MARITZBURG.

PHILIPP. I. 9, 10.

'AND THIS I PRAY, THAT YOUR LOVE MAY ABOUND YET MORE AND MORE IN KNOWLEDGE AND IN ALL JUDGMENT, THAT YE MAY APPROVE THE THINGS THAT ARE EXCELLENT.'

THESE words were written by St Paul when he was in 'bonds' for Christ's sake, a prisoner at Rome. We know the history of this great Apostle,—how he was trained in his early life in the straitest sect of the Jewish religion, a Hebrew of the Hebrews, a Pharisee of the Pharisees,—how he had then in his youth a great zeal for God, a great faith in God's Word, a great love for God's service, a great enthusiasm for the promotion of what he deemed the one only true religion,—but a zeal without knowledge, a faith without understanding, a love which was clouded with the thick fumes of bigotry and superstition, an enthusiasm which led him on to commit dire acts of violence and bloodshed, burning with blind hatred against the meek and lowly followers of Jesus, maddened with furious rage at the sight of their patient sufferings, at hearing their gentle prayers,—'Lord Jesus, receive my spirit!'—'Lord, lay not this sin to their charge!'

We know also that he long went on in this spirit, making havoc of the Church,—how he entered into every

house, and haling men and women, committed them to prison, 'punishing them oft in every synagogue, and compelling them to blaspheme,' and, 'when they were put to death, giving his voice against them.' And, not content with the work of this kind, which he had done in Jerusalem, so that all the saints 'were scattered abroad,' he was still, as he tells us, 'exceedingly mad against them, and persecuted them even to strange cities.' Now, however, while yet 'breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord,' and pressing on upon his way to Damascus, with letters from the high priest to the synagogues, 'that, if he found any of this way, whether they were men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem,' that great event took place—whatever it really may have been—by which the whole current of his life was changed, and in the light of God, which shone upon his soul in that hour, he saw plainly that the whole of his past career,—his zeal, his faith, his love, his enthusiasm,—was full of ignorance and unbelief. He saw that, instead of glorifying God by his fiery words and violent deeds, he had been all the while, as he says himself, 'a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious.' And only this was to be said on his behalf, that he knew not what he was doing,—that he did those things, not out of an evil heart, an ungodly hatred of all things loving, good, and true, but out of sincerity, according to the light he then possessed, out of a sincere desire to serve and glorify God; and therefore, he says, 'I obtained mercy, because I did it *ignorantly* in unbelief.'

But now the whole current of his life was changed. The same glowing zeal, faith, love, enthusiasm, which had hitherto been misdirected, were poured into the new channel of duty, which the grace of God had revealed to him. He felt that the mighty change, which had been wrought in him, was not of man, but of God. He had heard the Living Word of God speaking within him. He knew in himself that he was called of God, to go forth and teach that truth which once he had blasphemed, to 'preach the faith which once he destroyed.' And we all know how he laboured, even unto death,—a bloody death of martyrdom,—in this glorious task, bearing about with him continually 'in his body the marks of the Lord Jesus,' filling up in his

measure, as he tells us, that which still remained behind of the sufferings of Christ; drinking deeply of the cup of which his Master had drunk—

> 'troubled on every side, yet not distressed—perplexed, but not in despair—persecuted, but not forsaken—cast down, but not destroyed—always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be manifest in his mortal flesh.'

And now he is in bonds, in the city of Rome, in a heathen prison. But who sent him thither? Not the heathens themselves, to whom he had proclaimed that their idols were naught, that they should turn from these vanities unto the living God, 'whose offspring they were,' 'in whom they lived and moved and had their being;'—not the Roman Governor, before whom 'he reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come,' till Felix 'trembled;'—not Festus, who said, 'This man doeth nothing worthy of death or of bonds;'—not Agrippa, who answered, 'This man might have been set at liberty if he had not appealed unto Cæsar;'—no, not these, but his own countrymen and co-religionists, the 'chief priests and the elders of the Jews,' the zealous supporters of the old traditionary system, the orthodox maintainers of the Mosaic Law. Against these devout, but mistaken, believers the other Apostles had expressly warned him, when he came to Jerusalem.

> 'Thou seest, brother, how many thousands of Jews there are which believe, and they are all zealous for the Law; and they are informed of thee, that thou teachest all the Jews which are among the Gentiles to forsake Moses, saying that they ought not to circumcise their children, neither to walk after the customs.'

The charge, no doubt, was true. He, whom they had known of old as one—

> 'brought up in their own city, at the feet of Gamaliel, taught according to the perfect manner of the Law of their fathers, and zealous toward God, as the most zealous of them all that day'—

he who had 'profited,' as he tells us,—'in the Jews' religion above many his equals in his own nation, being more exceedingly zealous of the traditions of his fathers,—

had gone about saying that the Law was but 'a schoolmaster to bring them to Christ'—that they were 'no longer under the Law, but under Grace'—that 'circumcision was nothing, and uncircumcision was nothing, but the keeping of the commandments of God' and 'faith which worketh by love' was everything;—that 'they that are led of the Spirit are not under the Law'—that 'as many as are led by the Spirit of God are the sons of God.' The publication of such a Gospel as this, with all the noble energy of Paul's earnest, pure, self-sacrificing life, was a death-blow to the old traditionary Jewish system; and it brought upon him the fiery indignation of those, whose faith had been built up upon the mere letter of the Law,—who had not learned, as he now had, to drink into its spirit,—who had no knowledge or discernment, no spiritual sense, to 'approve the things most excellent' in the ancient Scriptures, to see that the mere letter passes away, but the spirit, the Living Word, endures for ever;—and who feared that all their dearest consolations, their boast and pride in this life, their hope for eternity, would be taken from them, if the Mosaic Law was set aside, and such 'heresies' as these of St Paul prevailed. It was they who had called him a 'pestilent fellow,' a 'mover of sedition among all the Jews throughout the world,' a 'ring-leader of the sect of the Nazarenes'—who 'would have judged him according to their law, had the civil power permitted them to do so—who 'laid many and grievous complaints against him, which they could not prove'—from whose violence and craft he had appealed unto Cæsar—

> 'I stand at Cæsar's judgment-seat, where I ought to be judged. To the Jews have I done no wrong, as thou very well knowest. If I be an offender, or have committed anything worthy of death, I refuse not to die. But, if there be none of these things, whereof these accuse me, no man may deliver me unto them. I appeal unto Cæsar.'

Under these circumstances, then, St Paul was conveyed to Rome a prisoner in bonds, though there, as we are told, he was allowed by the Roman authorities, to—

> 'dwell for two whole years in his own hired house, receiving all that came unto him, preaching the kingdom of God, and teaching those things which concern

the Lord Jesus Christ with all confidence, no man forbidding him.'

Nay, in the words which immediately follow the text, he says,—

'I would ye should understand, brethren, that the things which happened unto me have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the Gospel, and many of the brethren in the Lord, waxing confident by my bonds, are much more bold to speak the word without fear.'

As the Preacher of old has said, 'There is nothing new under the sun,' and that which hath been shall be. In different ages we see the same attempts made to suppress God's Truth, from the same mistaken motives, often coupled, as in Saul's early life they were, with devout piety and a sincere desire to glorify God;—and we see them made with the same results; the things, which have been meant to hinder, have only helped to further the progress of the Truth. And the grand example of St Paul, in the mighty conflict which was waged in his day, may be a source of comfort and support to the weakest of us, who in our small measure are called to take part in the great religious movement of our own time. However personally insignificant the combatants in the conflict of the present day, compared with the great Apostle of old, yet the conflict itself is the same—one which in the lapse of time is continually renewed again and again. It is, as in his days, the battle of the spirit against the letter, of the spirit of light and liberty, the spirit of the Gospel, against the exclusiveness and narrowness—the bondage—of the Law. We are told that 'whatever was written aforetime in the Scriptures was written for our learning'; and St Paul himself had to be taught by his own experience that the disciple was not to be above his Lord,—that if they had 'called the master of the house Beelzebub,'—if, out of a blind zeal for God, they had said of that holy and loving one, 'he hath a devil, he is mad, he deceiveth the people,' they would not spare those of his household. It is an act of humble faith, my brethren, and not of arrogance,—it is making that very use of the Bible, which as Christians it is our privilege and duty to make of it, if we, in this our day, while doing (as we trust) God's work of any kind, find comfort and support in studying the great examples

of the past. The Bible is never so well read and understood as in the light of experience.

Here, then, we find St Paul sitting down to write this letter to his dear Philippian converts. His heart is overflowing with the tenderest love towards them—'God is my record how greatly I long for you all in the bowels of Jesus Christ'; and then he pours out his earnest prayer for them in the words of the text—

> 'This I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment, that ye may approve the things that are excellent.'

It would seem that the remembrance of his own early life,—of zeal ill-directed, of love without knowledge,—of faith without power to discern the things that are most excellent in religion, the things essential to a living trust in God, and the things of lesser moment, which may be set aside, as the letter of the Mosaic Law was set aside, without any loss of our hope and joy, rather with the quickening and brightening of both,—had come back forcibly upon his mind at this moment, and with the greater weight, because he was even now suffering himself, at the hands of his Jewish brethren, the very treatment which he had once, in concert with them, inflicted on others. He would have his disciples, therefore, from the first, preserved from this narrow spirit of ignorance, intolerance, and real unbelief, however disguised under the appearance of a deeper piety, of a more anxious care for the honour of God, of a more ardent zeal for the salvation of men's souls. 'I pray,' he says, 'that your love may *abound*,'—it is great now—but may it 'yet more and more abound,' but abound 'in *knowledge*.'

Love, like Life, must have something to feed on. An increasing knowledge of the object of our love supplies the needful fuel to the sacred fire. But when that object is the Living and True God, the Supreme, the only Self-existent Being, *all* knowledge—as far as it *is* knowledge of truth, of fact, of that which is, or of that which has been,—is part of the knowledge of Him and of His ways, as manifested in the course of his Providence; and any error, any false opinion, respecting any of His works and doings, is of some importance, for it tends to dim, in some measure, our view of His glorious character. In our days, God him-

self has opened to us streams of knowledge, far beyond any which were accessible, or could ever have been dreamt of, in St Paul's time. St Paul himself, we know, was a learned man,—very learned indeed for the age in which he lived, and for the race to which he belonged. Not only was he fully exercised in the Hebrew Scriptures, and in such other branches of Jewish learning as formed the studies of the famous school of Gamaliel; but his own writings show that, beyond the strict habits of the Hebrews of Palestine, he had some acquaintance also with heathen literature, and could quote familiarly passages from Greek poets, as we see in his address at Athens and in his letter to Timothy. And the larger views of the Divine character which distinguish his writings,—that sense of the universality of Christ's Gospel, with which his whole heart overflowed, when once set free from the obstructions of the Jewish orthodox belief, and which burst forth continually in such language as this, so utterly opposed to the ignorant prejudices of his countrymen,—

> 'There is no difference between the Jew and the Greek; for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon Him; for whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved,'—
>
> 'For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Greeks, whether we be bond or free, and have been all made to drink into one Spirit,'—

that clearer perception of God's Love to all mankind, which he exhibits so constantly, as when he speaks of God as 'the Faithful Creator,' 'the Saviour of all men, though specially of them that believe,' or when he says that 'the Kindness and Love of God our Saviour towards man has appeared,'—all these are signs of a 'love abounding in knowledge.' Such knowledge, indeed, might have been present where there was no love. But, in his case, the living well was already springing up within him; and each fresh access of knowledge, we may be sure, was by God's Grace sanctified, and became a feeder to the great main stream of Love.

But how vastly does the knowledge of our own times exceed that of the days of St Paul! He, for instance, had a portion of the Bible—the Old Testament—in his hands,

and may, perhaps, have had a bulky manuscript of the sacred books,—probably in the Greek translation, from which he quotes,—a copy of his own for daily study. But how very few of the Philippian Christians could have had even this! We, in our days, have the Bible—the whole Bible—translated into almost every known tongue, and made accessible by the great discovery of printing, and the wonderful appliances of modern machinery, to every cottage in our land. And in that most marvellous and blessed Book good men and true, of all countries and classes, the most devout and earnest of all ages, have found rich stores of heavenly knowledge, abundant supplies of spiritual food,—'manna' for their daily journey in the wilderness, 'wine' that gladdens and 'bread' that strengthens man's heart, and 'oil that makes his face to shine,' with a bright hope and a cheerful content, in the midst of all life's troubles and difficulties. This common witness of the human mind in its best estate is a stronger evidence of the real divine worth of the Scriptures than any mere Church dogma of Scriptural Infallibility or any miraculous attestation could be. In this sense we may say, *Vox Populi, Vox Dei*—'the Voice of the People is the Voice of God.' It *is* true, for the universal conscience of mankind bears overwhelming testimony to it, that 'the Bible contains God's Word'—that it reveals the Mind and Will of God to Man.

When I say that 'the Bible contains God's Word,' I do not mean, as some have supposed, that we may pick and choose among the contents of the Bible—that we can separate those books or portions of the Bible, which *are* God's word, from those books or portions, which are *not*. I mean that throughout the Bible the Word of God will be heard, by the listening ear and the obedient heart, reproving, exhorting, instructing, comforting; but I say that this Word is 'the spirit and the life,' which breathes in the written words, not the mere 'flesh' or letter of the words themselves. 'The flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, they are life.' And, as we read the sacred text, we can feed by faith upon this bread of life, and feel our strength renewed, and the daily waste supplied of our spiritual substance; while yet our spirits have no power to assimilate the mere human elements,

which are of the earth earthy, which must pass away, having no fitness in themselves to sustain the life of our souls.

But, if God has given us so freely the knowledge of Himself in the Holy Scriptures, which His Providence has 'caused to be written for our learning,' He has also given us in this our day most wonderful illumination by the light of the different Sciences, which all come to us from Him, who is 'the Father of Lights, the Giver of every good and perfect gift.' So sudden has been the growth of this light, that, even in the childhood of many of us, the very names of many of those Sciences were hardly known. Yet now we stand surrounded, as it were, with the blaze of their commingled radiance; and, in every well-ordered school, lessons will be taught to our young children, with respect to the age of man, the history of the earth's formation, the distribution of animal-species upon the face of it, which will be seen hereafter, as they grow in years and power of thought, if they are not already seen by them, to conflict entirely with certain well-known Scripture statements. You must not send your children to any superior school, where the elementary truths of Geological Science are taught, if you would have them kept in strict bondage to the letter of the Bible, and to the old traditionary system of Scripture-teaching.

But no; we dare not do this; we dare not be wiser than God. When He is pleased to give us light, we dare not shut our eyes to its shining, and determine still to grope on in obscurity. If the light of Modern Science comes from God—and surely we believe it does—it must be as great a *sin* to despise or to disregard it, as to despise and disregard the Bible. And perhaps this very light of our own days, when the Bible is in every hand, may be given us in God's gracious Providence for this reason among others, that we may not make an *idol* of it,—that we may not read it with unreasoning acquiescence in every line and letter of the book, or rather that series of books, written by different men in different ages, bound up in one, which we call the Bible, but may read it with an intelligent faith, with the understanding as well as the heart.

Thus we need not be disquieted though the progress of Modern Criticism should take from us much in the Scrip-

tures, which perhaps without sufficient reason we had hitherto regarded as infallibly certain and true,—should show that the Scripture-writers were left to themselves, as men, in respect of all matters which God has meant to exercise our human industry, to be the objects of diligent, painstaking research. Our love must 'abound in all judgment,' says the Apostle, in spiritual taste, discernment, insight, to 'approve the things that are excellent,' or, as the margin renders it, to 'try the things that differ.' We must consider for what end the Bible is given to us, namely, to bring our spirits near to God; and we must seek, therefore, the proofs of the inspiration of its writers, not in matters of Science or History, but in those words of Eternal Life, which come to us with a power that is not of this world, and find us out in our inner being, with messages from God to the soul. And how comforting it is to know that all words of this kind, which God our Father has spoken to us, 'at sundry times and in divers manners,' —whether by Prophets and Apostles, or by the lips of our Lord—whether in the Bible or out of the Bible—stand firm and sure as God Himself is—as our own being is a reality—as our own moral consciousness, to which those living words appeal, is a sign that we are made in God's image!

I repeat, then, the views of God's character and doings, which we derive from the Bible, must be corrected and modified by those which we derive from other sources, by which He is pleased to reveal himself to Man. It is Our Father's Will that so it should be—that our love towards Him should abound yet more and more, in the clearer, fuller, knowledge of Himself, which the study of His Works supplies to us, no less surely than the study of His Word. We cannot be truly glorifying God, if we do not make use, according to our powers and opportunities, of each of these means of growing in this knowledge.

But so, too, as the character of God is better known, will love to our fellow-man the more abound. As St Paul's heart embraced both Jew and Greek, 'barbarian, Scythian, bond, and free,'—in one holy brotherhood of Christian love, so shall we, taking those larger views of the Power and Wisdom and Goodness of God, which we learn especially from the study of His Works, believe that the

message of the Gospel is meant for all Mankind,—that His Fatherly Love embraces all His children,—that His Living Word is even now speaking in the hearts of all, that Word which is the Light and Life of men.

Let our love then, brethren, towards God and man 'abound more and more in knowledge' of all kinds, 'and in all judgment, to discern and try the things that differ'; that so we may attain to a more perfect knowledge of our Great Creator, and worship Him with purer worship, 'in spirit and in truth.' In the words of our great English poet—

> Let knowledge grow from more to more;
> But more of reverence in us dwell,
> That heart and mind, according well,
> May make one music as before,
>
> But vaster. We are fools and slight;
> We mock Thee, when we do not fear;
> O teach Thy foolish ones to bear,
> Teach Thy vain worlds to bear Thy Light!

II.

THE DEVOURING FIRE.

PREACHED ON SUNDAY EVENING, NOV. 12, 1865, IN ST PAUL'S, DURBAN, AND ON SUNDAY MORNING, NOV. 26, 1865, IN THE CATHEDRAL, MARITZBURG.

ISA. XXXIII. 14.

'THE SINNERS IN ZION ARE AFRAID: FEARFULNESS HATH SURPRISED THE HYPOCRITES. WHO AMONG US SHALL DWELL WITH THE DEVOURING FIRE? WHO AMONG US SHALL DWELL WITH THE EVERLASTING BURNINGS?'

THERE never was a time when the Bible was more read than it is at the present day. This arises not only from the fact that it has been now translated into many tongues, and that the cheapness of printing and the exertions of the Bible Society have brought it within the reach of the poorest, at least in our own mother-land,—but also from the advance of education, which has enabled many more to read and understand its contents, or to hear them read by children and grandchildren, than was formerly possible. There was a time, not half a century ago, when no school existed in multitudes of villages in England, and when a blind ignorance, on the part of the masters themselves, in the agricultural districts, made violent opposition to the spread of education within the parishes subject to their influence. In these latter days, however, as we all know, the State has interfered to promote, in the best way it can devise, the great work of national education. And there is scarcely a village in England, which would not now think itself disgraced to be without a School, where the children may be trained to do service, as intelligent beings, to God and their fellow-men. The result is, as I have said, that now in almost every cottage-home the Bible will be read, and the

pages of the Sacred Book will be opened, to instruct the young in the fear and love of God, to strengthen the middle-aged for life's cares and trials and duties, to comfort the aged and afflicted, to solace the sick and dying. And, as I have said before, the fact that the true and faithful of all lands, of all ages, have found unspeakable delight and consolation in the study of the Scriptures, such as no other book has ever supplied,—have drunk from it, day by day, as from the brook by the way-side, the living stream which has refreshed their souls, while travelling hot and weary through this land of their pilgrimage,—this witness of the great human family, in its best and holiest moments, to the value of the Bible, is a surer evidence of its Divine original, of its Divine appointment to take a wonderful part in the religious education of mankind, than any decree of Synod or Council, or even than any miraculous proof could be.

But there is another reason which accounts for the closer study of the Bible in these days; and that is the remarkable movement within the Church,—not of our own land only, but of almost every Protestant country,—nay, even within the bounds of the Church of Rome itself,—which has arisen from the spreading of what is called by many a 'New Theology.' Why is this religious teaching rightly called 'new'? Not because it is new in the sense of being different from the old: for in fact it is only a renewing of the old,—a return to primitive truth,—a renovation of that which has been corrupted and deformed by age,—a fresh breaking-forth of the spring of living water, which has been choked-up and covered-over with rubbish and decaying matter. It is called new, because, as it has been justly said, it is 'the child of this new time,' of the age in which we live.

Objections, no doubt, have been made to certain Scripture statements in former ages,—sometimes by devout and sincere inquirers, whose minds were pained by the discoveries which they had made, as the results of their own conscientious researches,—at other times by men who wished to throw off the restraints of religion altogether, to say 'there is no God,' no revelation of God's Will to Man, no communion possible between the Father in Heaven and His children upon earth. But those attacks upon the

authority of Scripture were very different from the earnest searching inquiries, which are made in our own days, and the object of which is, to find out *what* the Bible is,—*how* God has been pleased to reveal Himself to Man in the Scriptures,—what is the age, history, origin, of its different portions. Investigations of this kind could not have been carried on except with the appliances of this new time, in which our lot is cast, and in which, remember, God calls us each to do our duty before Him, to be faithful to the Truth which He makes plain to us, to use joyfully and thankfully the Light with which He blesses us.

I have said that the movement of which I have been speaking is not confined to our own Church only, or to our own land. The whole of Protestant Europe is feeling this new life, which God's Grace has stirred within the various communions of Christendom. These, for instance, are the words of a living Dutch Divine: —

> The last fifty years have been pregnant with this time, and, like every other great Reformation, the movement of the present day has had its heralds and forerunners, to make ready and prepare its way. Through the gigantic development of Scientific Research, since the end of the great continental wars, the breach between the Scripture record of the world and its history, and of the history of man upon it, and that which the facts of Science disclose, has been growing ever greater and greater, in the minds of intelligent and thinking men. We know that, about two hundred years ago, in the days of Galileo, in spite of the violent resistance of the clergy, the flat earth of the Bible, about which the Sun revolved, had to give way to the Earth-ball rolling around the Sun. And now, in our own days, the discoveries of Natural Philosophers in the bowels of the Earth, within the last half-century, have shown us written there, by the Almighty Creator Himself, in beds of clay and coal, in petrified plants and animals, a totally different account of the Earth's formation and history from that which was known to the writer or writers of Genesis.
>
> What, now, what was to be done? There were only three paths open. Either, first, in the name of the Bible and Religion, the results of scientific in-

quiry—of which the fruits and blessings are elsewhere thankfully enjoyed, in every other department of life, with a cheerful and quiet conscience—must be stoutly denied, and declared to be profane and impious, as coming into collision with Scripture statements; or else, some desperate effort must be made to reconcile contradictions, such as in other matters, in respect of other books, it would never have been attempted to reconcile,—in other words, men must persuade themselves to have a Sunday belief, a Sunday measure of the meaning of words, different from that of a week-day; or, lastly, the Scripture view of the creation of the world, and of the age and history of man upon it, must be manfully abandoned, as at variance with the Truths, which God's own Finger has engraved upon the Rocks. Men hesitated long to do this last. Many did the first, others the second, but they shrank from doing the third.

Meanwhile, as we know, not a few Divines of all classes have all along been thundering anathemas against 'profane and vain babblings, and *oppositions of science falsely so called,*'—entirely ignorant, or, if not ignorant, then culpably forgetful, of the fact, that the Greek word translated 'science' in this passage, has nothing whatever to do with the researches of Natural Philosophy, but refers to certain wild notions in religion, called 'gnosis,' or 'knowledge,' from which the word 'Gnosticism' is formed, the name that was given to the ancient religious system embodying those views. The early Church was greatly troubled with the 'profane and vain babblings' of these Gnostics; and in various parts of the New Testament we find reference made to them. *Science*—true knowledge of any kind—St Paul would have blessed as a gift coming down from above, from the 'Father of Lights'; and, as we have heard, he prays for his dear Philippians that—'their love might abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment,—to discern the things that differ, to approve the things that are excellent.'

But he warns Timothy against 'oppositions' of the so-called 'gnosis'—'falsely so called,' he says, for 'gnosis,' as I have explained, means 'knowledge,' and the creed of the Gnostics was one mass of extravagance, absurdity, and

ignorance—of 'profane and old wives' fables,' as he describes it elsewhere, of 'fables and endless genealogies.'

Thus it has been, however, that during the past fifty years—down almost to the present day—the greatest of our Natural Philosophers, the very lights of the age, the highly-gifted men whom God in His Goodness has raised up to illuminate their brethren, have been charged by many excellent persons, by the (so-called) religious press, and by numbers of the clergy of all denominations, with irreligion, infidelity, atheism, because, like Galileo of old, they had announced to their fellow-men the discoveries, which, by the Divine gift of powerful intellects, and the Divine blessing upon the use of them, and as the result of many years of arduous labour, they were enabled to make in respect of the Creator's Works. The consequence was this, in the words of the writer already quoted, that—

> not a few great minds, indignant at so much dread of the Truth, turned away in disgust altogether from the religious teaching of the day,—turned away from a Church, on whose altars they might not offer, without first bringing the sacrifice of their reason, their knowledge, their unwearying lifelong labours.
>
> God be praised! this evil time is hastening fast to an end. The wondrous beauty and vigour and life—the eternal Truth—of the religion of Christ—of those words of undying power which He uttered, and which shall never pass away—has appeared again in our days, and with fresh lustre. A new Theology has sprung into being—not a new Religion, but a renewing of Religion, a return to the simple Gospel of Jesus Christ, stripped of the disfiguring accretions which later days have fastened upon it. And the teachers of this Modern School stand firm in this conviction, that they are doing the work of the Ever-Blessed God in trying to heal the breach between Faith and Knowledge, between devout religious Belief and Science, and translating the Eternal Religion of Jesus out of the language of the older ages into that of our own.

And sure we may be of this, my brethren, that that intense longing which pervades so many hearts in this our day, in all countries and in all classes, to find a way for ourselves out of the narrow dogmatic systems, in which in

our different Churches we have all been more or less trained, into that Christianity of which Dean Milman speaks,—

> comprehensive, all-embracing, Catholic, which knows what is essential in Religion, what is temporary and extraneous to it,—

that so we may breathe a purer air, and enjoy a clearer light, and have—

> Free space for every human doubt,
> That the whole mind may orb about—

is a certain proof that the Divine Educator of mankind Himself is here, and the Spirit of God moving even now upon the face of the waters.

But, now that the clergy have begun to feel that the philosophers are not to blame—that the results of scientific inquiry *must* be recognized as God's own truths, as surely as those in the Bible,—they are beginning also to perceive that they themselves have left their own work undone, their own Sacred Books unstudied. They have studied the Bible, no doubt, for devotional purposes; they have read, and pondered, expounded, and preached upon portions of it, in private and in public. But they have not thoroughly examined it in the original tongues, more especially in that of the Old Testament; they have not mastered it in such a way, as to be able to give a rational account of its age and history and contents. All this has yet to be done in the Church of England; and the work needful for this has even now been undertaken, as you are probably aware, by a body of clergy, under the direction of the Archbishop of York. But the very fact, that now for the first time in the history of our great National Church,—so powerful and wealthy, and numbering so many learned men among its clergy,—a critical Commentary on the Bible is being attempted by a body of Divines,—this fact, I say, is itself a sign of the wonderful lethargy in which we have long been steeped, as it is also an indication of the awakened life and energy, which God's good Spirit has in this new time aroused within the Church of England. Many now are closely engaged in the study of the Sacred Volume, who never read it in this way before. And many also, who, under the influence of the traditionary views, had long looked upon the Bible as a book full of perplexities and

contradictions, and perhaps had neglected it, or even laid it aside altogether, are now studying the Old Testament as well as the New with a deep and living interest. Released from the thraldom of mere bibliolatry, they are able now to reverence the Book of Genesis as containing some of the most ancient—perhaps *the* most ancient—writings in the world—as conveying to us directly, or by reasonable inference, a knowledge of some of the earliest facts in human history, of which we have any authentic information—above all, as recording, apparently, the first movements of higher Divine Life in the hearts of men of the Israelitish race, from which our own religious life has been, to a great extent, derived,—the kindlings of that spiritual flame, which in Israel's worst days, was never suffered to be quite extinguished, but fed from time to time with fresh supplies from the Eternal Source, beamed out at length upon the nations, bright and clear, in the full glory of the Gospel of Christ.

The result is that the Bible will be read henceforward far more intelligently than before,—with the understanding as well as with the heart. Mere quotations of texts will no longer suffice to maintain a dogma. Old conventional interpretations will be abandoned, and the true meaning will be restored to many grand passages of Scripture, which have hitherto been very commonly misunderstood or perverted. Take, for instance, the passage which I have chosen for my text:—'The sinners in Zion are afraid, fearfulness hath surprised the hypocrites. Who among us shall dwell with the Devouring Fire? Who among us shall dwell with the Everlasting Burnings?'

How many of us have not supposed that these words refer to the pit of woe,—to the 'everlasting burnings' of hell-fire? Who has not heard this passage quoted, either in private or in public, as referring, of course, to nothing but this? And yet, in reality, there is no such reference at all. The words have another meaning altogether,—a deep and solemn meaning, and, I believe, one of infinitely greater efficacy.

We may see this at once by merely reading the words of the text in connexion with the context which follows:

—'Who among us shall dwell with the Devouring

Fire? Who among us shall dwell with the Everlasting Burnings?'

And the answer is,—

'He that walketh righteously and speaketh uprightly; he that despiseth the gain of oppressions, that shaketh his hands from holding of bribes, that stoppeth his ears from hearing of blood, and shutteth his eyes from seeing evil. He shall dwell on high: his place of defence shall be the munitions of rocks: bread shall be given him; his water shall be sure. Thine eye shall see the King in His beauty: they shall behold the land that is very far off.'

It is plain that the 'Devouring Fire' in this passage is no other than the Living God. As the operation of the Holy Ghost is likened in Scripture to the wind that bloweth where it listeth, or to the spring of living water that cleanses and refreshes the soul,—so in many passages of the Bible the symbol of Devouring Fire is used to express the Divine Majesty, that burns up and consumes all that is unclean and unholy. Thus we read in one place, E. xxiv. 17,—

'The sight of the glory of Jehovah was like *Devouring Fire* in the eyes of the children of Israel.'

And again we read, in D. iv. 24,—

'Jehovah thy God is a *Consuming* (or *Devouring*) *Fire*, a jealous God.'

And so says the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews, xii. 29, quoting this very language of Deuteronomy,—

'For our God is a *Consuming Fire*.'

And, indeed, the whole passage before us finds an exact parallel in the 15th Psalm, where the Psalmist says:—

'Jehovah, who shall sojourn in thy Tabernacle? Who shall dwell in Thy holy hill?'

And he replies, just as the Prophet in the text:—

'He that walketh uprightly and worketh righteousness, and speaketh the truth in his heart. He that backbiteth not with his tongue, nor doeth evil to his neighbour, nor taketh up a reproach against his neighbour, nor taketh a bribe against the innocent. He that doeth these things shall never be moved.'

It is evident that the same idea is carried through in

both passages, and that the Prophet, in saying, 'Who shall dwell with the Devouring Fire? Who shall dwell with the Everlasting Burnings?' is really asking, like the Psalmist, 'Who shall dwell with the Holy and Blessed One? Who shall dwell with the Lord, the Living God?'

Let us now consider briefly the lessons of the Text. 'The sinners in Zion are afraid: fearfulness hath surprised the hypocrites.' In Zion, then—within the Church—it must be feared, there will be found 'sinners' and 'hypocrites,' the unfaithful, and impure, and falsehearted, the 'unjust and filthy,' those who 'make and love a lie.' And such as these 'shall be afraid'—'fearfulness shall surprise' them—in the day when the Judgment of God shall be manifested. It may be that with some of these, amidst the stir and bustle of life, the voice of conscience will not be heard, or will not be listened to: and it will only be at the last, when the closing hour is come, that the secret sins of such men will rise up before them, will make the soul tremble in the thought of the great account, and shudder already as a guilty thing before the presence of its Judge. Or it may be in the case of others that here—here in this world—their sin will find them out, if it is not repented of and forsaken—as well as in the world to come. Suddenly, in a moment, the 'day of the Lord' will come upon them, as a thief in the night,—some solemn event, some awful crisis in their lives,—'and they shall not escape'; and they will feel the wretched consciousness of having borne the Christian name, and having lived to dishonour it. How shall they hope to dwell with 'the Devouring Fire'—with Him who is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity?

Nay! Who among us shall be able to dwell with Him—to dwell with 'the Everlasting Burnings'? In ourselves indeed we are all unfitted for this—unworthy to approach the Throne of His Glory—unable to lift up our heads for very shame, at the remembrance of all our sins and misdoings. But, blessed be God! we know that in a thousand ways of Mercy He has spoken peace to the troubled conscience, and forgiveness to the broken-hearted and penitent. Not only is He our 'Faithful Creator,' who 'knows our frame and remembers that we are but dust,' who is 'loving unto every man,' and whose 'tender

mercies are over all His works';—not only may we see around us daily, in the provisions of His Goodness, innumerable evidences of His Kindness and Love to man, may see that He has filled the fields with flowers, and the woods with song, and made us capable of enjoying His Goodness;—not only does each new discovery of Science give new grounds for thankfulness and adoration, while we consider that the beds of stone and lime and clay and coal were laid up in the Earth's bosom, ages and ages ago, with express reference to the wants, in express preparation for the coming into being, of just such a creature as Man;—not only do we realize that each ray of light, which shines upon our bodily or mental eyes, is a messenger of love to us from our Father in Heaven, a sign that, notwithstanding all our faults, He is caring for us still, and bestowing His blessings upon us;—but above all this, we have the constant teaching of His Spirit, the Comforter who dwells with us for ever, to assure us that He deals with us as children, is guiding us here by His Counsel and preparing us for His Glory.

And the Bible contains the record of the religious life of our fellow-men in other ages, in other countries, under other circumstances, but all under the teaching of the same good Spirit. The Psalms, that expressed the thoughts and feelings of men under that Divine Influence two or three thousand years ago, are still the identical utterances which suit our present necessities, and in which we delight to pour out our souls' desires and longings, our hopes and fears and penitential confessions, before the Mercy-seat of God. How comforting it is to feel that it is one and the selfsame Spirit, who breathed on the hearts of Psalmists and Prophets and Apostles of old, that is now breathing on our hearts, 'teaching us to say, Abba! Father!' and then to remember that all tokens of our Father's Favour are summed up and sealed in that Message of Love, which the Christ himself has spoken to us—that in all the life of Jesus, his life of toil and suffering, sympathy with man's sorrow, endurance of man's sins—as well as in his death, of patient submission to his Father's Will, of living trust in God, of tender pity and forgiveness for those who nailed him to the bloody cross,—the Eternal Son was manifesting the Father to us,—was revealing the Father's gracious

character,—was working out the Father's Will, the Will of Him whom He proclaimed to us as His Father and our Father, as His God and our God!

But as he was—yea, 'as God is,' says the Apostle—'so are we in the world.' And all love with which the human heart is filled—the love of father, husband, brother, friend—the love which is breathed from man to man in our daily intercourse with one another—the compassion which *we* feel for the fallen and outcast—the tenderness with which *we* 'bear the griefs' of our fellow-men and 'carry their sorrows'—the readiness with which we run to receive the returning prodigal, and fall upon his neck with tears and kisses—the joy with which we rejoice over one sinner that repenteth—the anguish which we should feel, if we really believed that any one of our fellow-men would be eternally lost—all these are outflowings of that spring of life, which God's own Spirit has opened within us, and by which we know that in very deed and truth we are His children: they shadow forth imperfectly on earth our Father's Excellencies: they witness that the Living Word—the Life and Light of men—the Eternal Son of God—is dwelling among us. They unfold and illustrate the meaning of St Paul when he says that 'Christ is in us, the hope of Glory.'

There is, then, hope that we—even we—feeble creatures of the dust as we feel ourselves to be—shall yet, through God's Grace, be suffered to dwell with Him in Light hereafter. It may be that some change will be needed to pass upon us in order to fit us for this—that the fire of 'that day,' of which the Apostle speaks, shall purge out our dross, shall cleanse away the remainder of corruption which still clings about the best of us in this world, and make us meet for our Eternal Home. But there *is* our Home. And what now are we to do on earth, while still waiting for the summons to come up higher, and sit down in the nearer presence of God? The Prophet tells us, as we have heard, in the words which follow the text:—

> 'Who among us shall dwell with the Devouring Fire? Who among us shall dwell with the Everlasting Burnings? He that walketh righteously and speaketh uprightly; he that despiseth the gain of oppressions, that shaketh his hand from holding of bribes, that

stoppeth his ears from hearing of blood, and shutteth his eyes from seeing evil.'

This is the language of a Jewish Prophet, who lived in an age when masters were oppressors, and judges were bribed, and the feet of many were swift to shed blood. In the language of a Christian Apostle of a later age, it is repeated in those words which follow the text of my former discourse, where he prays that his Philippian converts might be 'sincere and without offence,'—that is, without giving cause of offence or stumbling to others,—

'unto the Day of Christ, being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ unto the glory and praise of God,'—

for in those other words of the same Apostle, where he says to the Colossians,—

'We do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that you might be filled with the knowledge of His Will, in all wisdom and spiritual understanding—that ye might walk worthy of the Lord, unto all well-pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God,—strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power, unto all patience and long-suffering with joyfulness, giving thanks unto the Father, who hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the Saints in Light.'

We see, then, our calling, brethren. Our work on earth is to glorify God, 'with our body, soul, and spirit, which are God's'; it is, to 'purify ourselves, even as He is pure'; it is, to be 'followers of God, as dear children,'—to be 'perfect even as our Father in Heaven is perfect.' And that work we *can* do, so as to please God. In our own strength we know we can do nothing. But in the strength of that Divine Spirit which is given to us,—trusting in God's Fatherly Mercies, declared and pledged to us in innumerable ways, but specially by Christ our Lord,—we *can* live, each of us, as becomes the children of God, 'the sons and daughters of the Lord Almighty.'

'Wherefore we, receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace whereby we may serve God acceptably, with reverence and godly fear; for our God is a Devouring Fire.'

III.

PERFECT THROUGH SUFFERINGS.

PREACHED ON SUNDAY MORNING, DEC. 3, 1865, IN THE CATHEDRAL, MARITZBURG.

HEB. II. 10—13.

'FOR IT BECAME HIM, FOR WHOM ARE ALL THINGS, AND BY WHOM ARE ALL THINGS, IN BRINGING MANY SONS UNTO GLORY, TO MAKE THE CAPTAIN OF THEIR SALVATION PERFECT THROUGH SUFFERINGS. FOR BOTH HE THAT SANCTIFIETH, AND THEY WHO ARE SANCTIFIED, ARE ALL OF ONE: FOR WHICH CAUSE HE IS NOT ASHAMED TO CALL THEM BRETHREN, SAYING 'I WILL DECLARE THY NAME UNTO MY BRETHREN, IN THE MIDST OF THE CHURCH WILL I SING PRAISE UNTO THEE,'—AND AGAIN, 'I WILL PUT MY TRUST IN HIM,'—AND AGAIN, 'BEHOLD I AND THE CHILDREN WHICH GOD HATH GIVEN ME.''

WE are accustomed to speak of the Epistle to the Hebrews as one of St Paul's Epistles: and, in fact, in our English Bibles the inscription stands distinctly 'the Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Hebrews.' And yet it is very doubtful indeed if St Paul wrote it: or rather, I should be perfectly justified in saying that it is most probable that he did *not* write it. Do not suppose that this is a new discovery, or one of the 'heresies' which have been so freely charged of late upon those, who have laboured to the best of their power, faithfully and diligently, as God's servants, in the field of Modern Criticism; while others have been content to take upon authority, without inquiry and examination, the assertions of former ages, and to cling tenaciously to old traditionary teachings. But from the earliest ages of the Church,—even in the second century of the Christian era,—the origin and history of the Epistle to the Hebrews was a subject of great discussion.

The early Church could not determine whether it was written by Barnabas, by Luke, by Clement, or by Paul. The great critical Father, St Jerome, who lived in the fourth century, says—

> That which is called the Epistle to the Hebrews is thought not to be Paul's, because of the difference of style and language, but is ascribed either to Barnabas (according to Tertullian), or to Luke the Evangelist (according to some authorities), or to Clement (afterwards Bishop of Rome), who is said to have arranged and adorned Paul's sentiments in his own language.

But, a century nearer to the Apostolic time, the learned Alexandrian Father, Origen, had written:—

> If I were to express my own opinion, I should say that the thoughts are the Apostle's, but the language and composition that of some one who recorded from memory the Apostle's teaching, and, as it were, illustrated with a brief commentary the sayings of his master. If, then, any Church holds this epistle to be Paul's, let it please itself on this point also: for it was not without some reason that the men of old time have handed it down as Paul's. But who it was who wrote the epistle, God only knows certainly. The account which has reached us is manifold—some saying that Clement, who became Bishop of Rome, wrote it, while others assign it to Luke, the author of the Gospel and the Acts.

The Church of Rome now maintains that St Paul was the author of this epistle; though during the second, third, and fourth centuries it denied its Pauline origin, as the famous African prelate Cyprian in the fourth century denied it. There are many in the Church of England, who believe that St Paul wrote it,—some, after examining into the subject,—most, no doubt, merely because of the inscription in our English Bibles. Yet the great Reformers judged otherwise. Calvin says 'I cannot be brought to acknowledge Paul as its author,' and Luther distinctly assigned it to Apollos.

I mention these things to you for various reasons:—

First, because these are facts, with which, in an educated age like this, every intelligent reader of the Bible should be acquainted, as tending to illustrate the way in

which even those Scriptures, which we call 'Canonical,' have been brought together, without any certain knowledge, in many cases, as to the author, or authors, by whom they were written;—

Secondly, because it is good for us at times to be shaken out of the dull routine of traditionary teaching, and be taught to see that all is not so positive and certain in these matters as some have asserted,—should be taught to inquire, and read, and think for ourselves, as reasoning men, and not submit ourselves blindly to the yoke of authority;—

Thirdly, because what has occurred in this case throws light also upon what has occurred in other similar instances.

Our English Bible speaks of 'The Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Hebrews'; and most English Christians suppose in consequence that St Paul did actually write it.* You have now seen how little certain ground there is for this supposition. But so, too, the English Bible speaks of the First, Second, &c., 'Books of Moses.' And, even if these expressions did not mean, as most probably they do, the Books which *tell us about Moses* (as the Books of Samuel, of Job, of Esther, which no one imagines to have been written by Samuel, Job, or Esther),—if, I say, these inscriptions in the English Bible were really intended to say that the Books of Genesis, Exodus, &c., were actually written by Moses,—yet this would be no sufficient reason for believing that such was really the case: these inscriptions might be just as erroneous as that prefixed to the Epistle to the Hebrews. And I need hardly say that the results of Modern Criticism prove that this is indeed so —that the so-called 'Five Books of Moses' were certainly not written by Moses, and that the Book of Deuteronomy in particular was composed in the time of one of the later kings of Judah.

But I set these facts before you in the fourth place in order that I may take the opportunity of impressing upon you the great truth, that Man's salvation—his happiness

* Although this no doubt is the popular inference from the title as it stands in our English Bible, Dr Lushington decided in the case of the Bishop of Salisbury v. Williams, that it is not forbidden by the Law of the Church of England to maintain that the Book of Daniel was not written by Daniel; or that the second Epistle of St Peter was not written by St Peter; or that the Epistle to the Hebrews was *post-apostolic*.

in this life, his hope for eternity—cannot possibly depend upon his having a correct faith on such points as these, upon his being accurately informed or soundly instructed in respect of any questions of this kind, which are enough to exercise the strongest intellects, and require severe study to master them, if indeed they can be mastered at all. All such knowledge, no doubt, is valuable, and may be turned to good account, by the earnest intelligent spirit, towards acquiring a clearer view of the Divine Being, of His works and ways, of His dealings with Man, of the progress of Divine Revelation, of the growth and development of the religious life, in different races and ages of mankind. It is 'bread' for the human mind to feed upon, and such food will be assimilated by the pious heart, and help to strengthen faith and love. But 'Man does not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the Mouth of God.' If the life of our souls depend wholly, or mainly, or in any essential respect, upon our having a clear knowledge and an orthodox belief upon such matters as these, what multitudes would be excluded from the Kingdom of God! How very few would be able to become wise unto salvation!

Blessed be God! the way of Life Eternal is not so difficult to find as this. Narrow it may be—narrow indeed it is—as our Lord has said, and sensual pleasures and temptations closely beset us round on every side, and daily and hourly allure us to forsake it. But it is not hedged up with thorns, so that the wayfaring man may not be able to find it or set his foot in it, unless guided by the priest. The hand of God Himself, our Heavenly Father—His gracious Hand—has planted our footsteps in the pathway of life: His Living Word has said within the heart of each of us 'This is the way, walk ye in it'; and again and again, as we have foolishly wandered from it, or sinfully abandoned it, His loving Spirit has led us back, has healed our backslidings, and spoken the words of forgiveness and peace. But that Living Word, which speaks to our hearts the lessons of Divine Eternal Truth, is something very different from the voice of human authority enforcing Church Dogmas, Creeds, and Articles. It speaks with a power which is not of this world, to which our reason assents, to which our conscience bows, which our

whole spiritual being recognizes at once as the power of Eternal Truth, having an authority which cometh from God. That Word needs not to be enforced by persuasion or argument: it is felt at once to be a Living Word, a Word of Truth, bringing a message from God to the soul. It comes with that power to all alike—to the learned and unlearned, to the wise and unwise, to the civilized man and the savage, wherever the eye of the soul is not altogether blinded and darkened. For that Word is Light and Life to the soul of man. Just as the bodily eye, if not depraved by disease, or otherwise unfitted for the ordinary work of life, sees the light of day, and needs no evidence to prove that it is light,—just as the bodily eye is made expressly for seeing that light, and naturally welcomes it, and rejoices in it,—so too is the eye of the soul so constituted by the Great Creator, that in our natural normal state we may see the light of truth, and recognize it at once wherever we see it, and joyfully welcome it. Nay, even when man's spiritual eyesight is depraved in a measure, and diseased by sin, yet, if it be not utterly destroyed and darkened, it will still perceive the beauty of that Divine Light. Though now unused to look upon it, —though perhaps even now unable without pain to endure its brightness, because he has loved the darkness rather than the light, knowing that his deeds were evil,—yet still such a man as this will feel at times how blessed it would be to enjoy, as he was meant to enjoy, the bright shining of that pure Divine Light, to walk in the Light as God is in the Light, to bring his daily doings to the Light, that he may see if they are wrought in God.

> 'Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness; for they shall be filled!' 'Blessed are the merciful; for they shall obtain mercy!' 'Blessed are the pure in heart; for they shall see God!' 'Blessed are the peacemakers; for they shall be called the children of God!'

Are these words true, merely because they are written in the Bible, or merely because they were spoken by the Lord Jesus Christ himself? Are they not felt at once by us to be essentially, eternally true? Would they not be just as certainly true, wheresoever they were written, by whomsoever they were spoken? Do we not know that they are

among those words which 'shall never pass away'—which we, human beings, in our best estate—we who are all, by the great work of God's redeeming Love, made children of God, yea, sons and daughters of the Lord Almighty—'brethren' of Christ, as the text says, for 'both he that sanctifieth,' that is, Christ, 'and they that are sanctified,' that is, the human race, the children whose flesh and blood he shared, 'are all of One,'—are not, I say, such words as these among those, which, by the unanimous verdict of the human mind, in its best and holiest moments, we 'bind on earth, and they shall be bound in heaven'?

I repeat, then, such as these are the words of life which we find in the Bible, abundantly, on almost every page—not the mere statements of Scripture writers in respect of matters of Science or History—about which they were left to the ordinary sources of human information, and fell into the common mistakes, or adopted the current notions of their own times.

Thus, for instance, in the text before us, you will find several passages quoted from the ancient Scriptures, as having express reference to Christ, and his brotherhood with us.

> 'For both he that sanctifieth, and they who are sanctified, are all of One'—we have all One Father;—'for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren, saying, 'I will declare Thy Name unto my brethren, in the midst of the Church will I sing praise unto Thee,'—and again, 'I will put my trust in Him,'—and again, 'Behold I and the children which God hath given me.''

Here are three quotations from the ancient Hebrew Scriptures, which the writer of this epistle, whoever he may have been,—Barnabas, Luke, Clement, Apollos,—produces as prophetical passages, as shadowing forth beforehand the brotherhood of Jesus Christ with us. That indeed he was our brother we are sure: that his heart overflowed with the tenderest brotherly love, we know from the whole record of his life and death, summed up in those his dying words,—'This is my commandment, that ye love one another, as I have loved you: greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.' But we in this day should never think of build-

ing up a proof of his brotherhood upon such texts as these, —at least upon two of them, which are torn from their true context, and, however they may sound to our ears when read in their present connexion, will yet be seen to have no direct bearing at all upon the point, which the Scripture-writer is here enforcing.

The first of these passages is this,—

'I will declare Thy Name unto my brethren, in the midst of the Church will I sing praise unto Thee.'

If we look for this passage in the older Scriptures we shall find it in the 22nd verse of the 22nd Psalm,—

'I will declare Thy Name unto my brethren, in the midst of the Congregation will I praise Thee;'

and this Psalm indeed is regarded by many as being highly prophetical, and as pointing out beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow. Some parts of it, in fact, are strikingly applicable to the circumstances of our Lord's crucifixion—

'They pierced my hands and my feet,'—'They parted my garments among them, and upon my vesture did they cast lots'—'All they that see me laugh me to scorn; they shoot out the lip, they shake their head, saying, He trusted on Jehovah that he would deliver him; let Him deliver him, if he delight in him;'

and in the first and fourth Gospels reference is made to the words of the Psalm as fulfilled in those circumstances. And yet some of the most devout modern commentators—even of the class called 'orthodox'—deny altogether that this Psalm has any direct Messianic tendency. They see in it only the lamentable cry of some fellow-man of other days, who poured out the deep sorrow of his heart before the mercy-seat of God. They believe that our Lord, when in his own hour of bitter agony he broke forth into prayer in the first words of this Psalm,—'My God! my God! why hast thou forsaken me?'—was only using these words of the Sacred Book, as embodying in most expressive language the anguish with which his own spirit was filled. They see that there are words in the Psalm which can scarcely, by any process of accommodation, be made to apply to the sufferings of Christ, as, for instance, 'I will pay my vows before them that fear Him.' At the best, therefore, they say, it is but a strained interpretation,

by taking some expressions and omitting others, which explains the Psalm as actually intended to predict some centuries beforehand the sufferings of Christ. Still, as I have said, there are undoubtedly many expressions in it, which suit remarkably to the circumstances of that dread event, as recorded in the Gospel narratives.

But this cannot be said of the other two quotations, upon which is here based a proof of the brotherhood of Jesus Christ with Man:—

'and again, 'I will put my trust in Him,' and again, 'Behold I and the children which God hath given me.'' If we look for these words we shall find them in a strange connexion, having nothing whatever to do with the subject now under consideration, in the midst of one of the prophecies of Isaiah. Let me read the whole context in Isa. viii. 11—18:—

'For Jehovah spake thus to me with a strong hand, and instructed me that I should not walk in the way of this people, saying, Say ye not 'a confederacy,' to all them to whom this people shall say 'a confederacy,' neither fear ye their fear, nor be afraid. Sanctify Jehovah of Hosts Himself, and let Him be your fear, and let Him be your dread. And He shall be for a Sanctuary, but for a stone of stumbling and a rock of offence to both the Houses of Israel, for a gin and for a snare to the inhabitants of Jerusalem. And many among them shall stumble and fall, and be broken, and be snared, and be taken. Bind up the testimony, seal the law among my disciples. And I will wait upon Jehovah, that hideth His Face from the House of Jacob, and—[here come the two passages quoted in the text]—*I will look for Him. Behold I and the children, whom Jehovah hath given to me,* are for signs and for wonders in Israel from Jehovah of Hosts, which dwelleth in Mount Zion.'

The reference is plainly to two children, about whom the prophet had just been writing,—one whom he was to name 'Immanuel,' another whom he was to call 'Maher-shalal-hashbaz,'—which two children were to be 'for signs and for wonders in Israel from Jehovah of Hosts,' inasmuch as, before the one should be old enough to 'know to refuse the evil and choose the good, the land, which' King Ahaz

'abhorred, should be forsaken of both her kings,' and before the other 'should have knowledge to cry, 'My father and my mother,' the riches of Damascus and the spoil of Samaria should be taken away before the King of Assyria.' Such is the true meaning of the words of Isaiah, when explained in their proper connexion. But here, in the Epistle to the Hebrews, they are separated altogether from the context, and adduced as distinct proofs of the Lord Jesus being one with his brethren :—'I will put my trust in Him,' that is, like any other son of man, I too, the Son of Man, will put my trust in the Living God,—and again, 'Behold I and the children which God hath given me'—that is, these children of mine are one with me, the Son of Man—partakers together with me of the same flesh and blood.

The fact is that the writer of this epistle to the Hebrews is addressing, most probably, the famous ancient Church of Alexandria, or rather the Hebrew portion of that Church, the Jews then living in Egypt who had become Christians. We know that a vast body of Hebrews had settled in Alexandria—that for their use the Greek translation of the Scriptures was made, which we call the Septuagint Version, and which differs materially in many places from the Hebrew Text, of which we have the translation in our own English Bibles. And in this Church of Alexandria the allegorical interpretation of Scripture very greatly prevailed. There the famous Jew Philo wrote in this style, about the time of our Lord : there the philosophy of Plato was deeply studied, and was blended intimately with Christian teaching, so that the writings of the early Greek Fathers—Clement of Alexandria, and especially the famous Origen—show strong signs of this allegorical mode of interpreting Scripture, by which it was sought to reconcile the deep mysterious doctrines of the Platonic Philosophy with the Eternal Truths of the Gospel of Christ. To this spirit of allegorical interpretation, which was specially fostered by the study of Philo's works, may be attributed the practice, which we observe in the passage before us and in other parts of this epistle, of taking texts out of the old Scriptures, torn from their context, and explaining them as referring to Christ, without paying any regard to their literal meaning, or to the connexion in which they originally stood.

> The arguments used throughout the epistle imply, on the part of those to whom it is addressed, a power of appreciating that spiritualising and allegorical interpretation of the writings of the Old Testament, which distinguished the Alexandrian School of Jewish Theology.

In fact, as the commentators, from whom these last words are quoted, in their *Life and Letters of St Paul*, observe—

> The resemblance between the language of this epistle and the writings of Philo is most striking, and extends, as the researches of Modern Criticism have distinctly shown, not only to the general points just mentioned, but to particular doctrines and particular expressions.

How far, then, it may be asked, is such allegorical interpretation of Scripture allowable and just? To what extent, for instance, should we be right in using such expressions, as are here quoted from the book of Psalms and the prophecies of Isaiah, and regarding them as referring distinctly to Jesus Christ? We may do so by way of illustration—but not by way of compulsion and argument. It would be unsafe to rest our faith in the brotherhood of Jesus upon such passages as these,—to adduce them as convincing proofs of it,—much more to require men to believe, on pain of eternal woe, that such texts as these—so doubtful and obscure at the best, if they have any such reference at all—were intended by the Psalmist and Prophet in ancient times, and by the Divine Spirit who taught them, to shadow forth to us in later days our Lord's Humanity. But we may say that all human utterances such as these—all words of devout, true-hearted, men in all ages—are witnessing of the Christ of God,—of the true Son of Man, the perfect Type of Humanity, in whom the Divine Idea of what a true living man should be is realised before the Eye, and in the Mind, of God—are witnessing of Him, in whom the Father is well pleased, and with us in Him. We may say also that the brave deeds—the loving lives—the patient endurance even unto death for the sake of God and His Truth—of all good men and true, throughout the whole history of humanity, is part of that Great Sacrifice which God in Man—the Spirit of Christ that

dwelleth in us, and gives us a foretaste of Eternal Life here, and a hope of Glory hereafter—is ever offering, 'holy acceptable unto God' our Father—filling-up, as St Paul says, 'that which was left behind of the afflictions of Christ.'

In this way still, day by day, the language of the text is being fulfilled. 'It became Him, for Whom are all things and by Whom are all things'—that is, it seemed meet to our Heavenly Father, with respect to Whose Blessed Will, by Whose unerring Wisdom and Love, all things in heaven and earth are ordered—'in bringing many sons unto glory,' —observe, it is not said, 'in saving a few wretched sinners from the pit of woe,'—'to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings.' Our Lord Jesus Christ—the holy and loving one—our Leader in God's battle-field —had not done all his Father's Will—had not fulfilled his work on earth—was not made 'perfect,'—until he had sealed his faithfulness in death—until he had received, as the reward, in this world, of unwearied love, of tender compassion, and self-sacrificing labour for the good of men, the meed of insult and mockery, of shame and spitting, the scourge, the crown of thorns, the bloody cross,—until he had passed through the grave and gate of death, saying to himself, like any one of us his brethren, 'Though He slay me, yet will I put my trust in Him,'—crying at one moment, 'My God! My God! why hast Thou forsaken me?'—at another, 'Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do,'—and at last, with his dying voice, breathing out his soul, 'Father, into Thy hands I commend my spirit.'

Yet both 'he who sanctifieth, and they that are sanctified, are all of One.' We are all his brethren; and in us too must the same work be done, and, like as the head, so too must the members of the body of Christ be 'perfected through sufferings.' The perfection of Man's material state has been provided for, we know, ages ago, in a most wonderful manner by the wisdom of his Great Creator: the marble for his buildings, the coal for his machinery has been laid up during millions and millions of years in the bowels of the earth. Yet such material perfection—nay, even intellectual perfection—is not, after all, *the* perfection of Man: this is a moral, a

spiritual, perfection, to which we may all in our measure attain. When we speak of Man's *likeness* to his Creator, though his intellect, his reason, is part of his inheritance as the son of God, is a ray from the Supreme Reason, yet it is chiefly of moral perfection that we really think, a conformity to the Holy, Loving Will of God. 'What is Man that Thou art mindful of him, or the son of Man that Thou visitest him?' And yet we *are* children of God, made in our Father's image, with power to love Him and grow like Him; and we are bidden to be 'followers of God as dear children,' to be 'perfect,' in love and truth and purity, 'even as our Father in Heaven is perfect.' In respect of this moral perfection, then, we can be made like unto God,—we can be made holy and true, pure and loving, —we can 'put on Christ.' And sure we may be, that one living soul, the lowliest and humblest amongst us, reflecting thus the Divine Image, is infinitely more precious in the eyes of its Creator than any mass of dead unconscious matter, however wondrously fashioned,—than all the laws and systems of the Universe—nay, even than the keenest intellect, that ever fathomed the Creator's ways, or brought under human rule created powers and elements. But 'perfect through sufferings'—that is the only key to this perfection. We must be perfected through conflict, a lifelong resistance to evil: we must be perfected through love, a lifelong self-sacrifice, for the glory of God and the good of our fellow-men: we must be perfected, in one word, through those sufferings, of which in all Christian lands, the symbol is the Cross,—the Cross which our Lord and Master bore, and on which he died.

IV.

THE FALLIBILITY OF THE SCRIPTURES.

PREACHED ON SUNDAY MORNING, DEC. 10, 1865, IN THE CATHEDRAL, MARITZBURG.

ROM. XV. 4—7.

'WHATSOEVER THINGS WERE WRITTEN AFORETIME, WERE WRITTEN FOR OUR LEARNING, THAT WE THROUGH PATIENCE AND COMFORT OF THE SCRIPTURES MIGHT HAVE HOPE. NOW THE GOD OF PATIENCE AND CONSOLATION GRANT YOU TO BE LIKEMINDED TOWARD ONE ANOTHER, ACCORDING TO CHRIST JESUS; THAT YE MAY WITH ONE MIND AND ONE MOUTH GLORIFY GOD, EVEN THE FATHER OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST. WHEREFORE RECEIVE YE ONE ANOTHER, AS CHRIST ALSO RECEIVED US, TO THE GLORY OF GOD.'

'THAT we through comfort of the Scriptures might have hope.' And you will take from us the Scriptures! You will rob us of this source of hope! You will leave us bewildered, friendless orphans, to find our dreary way, as best we may, through the waste howling wilderness of life, —with only the moon-and-star-light of the Sciences to help us, or, at the best, the dull day-light of Natural Religion, dimmed with the clouds of human error and uncertain speculation,—but without the bright shining of the Sun of Revealed Truth, without the warmth of that Divine Word, which we have felt so continually, kindling a glow of life within us, as we read the pages of the Bible, 'rejoicing the heart, enlightening the eyes,' reviving, strengthening, cheering, comforting!

And you shall feel it still, my brethren. That wailing cry, which you know has been resounding, during the last three years, from the (so-called) religious press of England,—which has there struck dismay into many a pious heart, and perhaps has found its echo in Natal,—was, thank

God! a cry of groundless alarm. It was a cry of terror, as of children wakened-up suddenly from a pleasant dream, before they had begun to realize with their startled senses the actual state of things around them, and to feel that life itself, with its active energies, is full of its own sweet joy, though the careless pleasure of the dream is gone. But that first feeling of very natural alarm was greatly intensified by the conduct of those who should have soothed and stilled it,—whose office it was to bring their learning and piety, the influence of character, station, and age, to the help of their troubled brethren—who should have shown them that the new discoveries of Science, whether in Natural Philosophy or Biblical Criticism, *must* be received, indeed, and be received with joy and thankfulness as God's gifts, the gifts of a dear Father to his children, but *may* be received without any sacrifice of the gifts with which He has already blessed us, without any loss to the soul, without any detriment to the vital principles of true religion, and the essential truths of Christianity.

How, indeed, should this not be the case? If the Christian Religion is of God, it must in its fundamental principles be at one with all Truth, with the teaching of the Sciences as well as with that of the Bible. What are the *vital principles* of true Religion—the *essential Truths* of Christianity—is a question which may have to be considered anew in these days, in the Light of God's later Revelations. It is possible that we may have much to modify in our views on these points, and that our Lord and his Apostles, if now on earth, would hardly approve of every sentence of our Articles and Formularies, as containing absolute, infallible, Eternal, Truth, and nothing but Truth. And as an eminent living writer has just said (of whom I shall presently speak more particularly),—

> It might be easy to show that, what is now popularly thought to be in some respects the true and only meaning of the great doctrines of Christianity, *had no existence at all in the earliest days.*

But this I say—as the testimony of one who has resolved, by God's Grace, not to shut his eyes to facts of any kind, which in these our days God's Wisdom is pleased to make known to His children,—of one who has thoroughly

searched one portion at least of the Sacred Volume, and knows now, perhaps, almost as much as is at present known of its unhistorical character, its variance with scientific certainties, its discrepancies and contradictions, —this I say, that, the more the Bible is studied, the more Divine it seems,—the more august, and grand, and wonderful,—the more full of real support and solid comfort for the soul of man.

In these days, happily, very many of us have been already freed, by the advance of education and our acquaintance with the facts of Science, from a slavish adherence to the mere letter of the Scriptures. But I will say this also that, whereas in the first sudden burst of the discovery that the traditionary teaching is unsound and delusive,—that, so far from being in every line and letter infallibly true, the Bible, with all its Divine Lessons, is yet a human book, a collection of ancient writings by fallible men, and full of human errors, mistakes, contradictions, inconsistencies,—I say, whereas in the first moment of this discovery, the effect may be to those, who have been brought up rigidly under the old traditionary system, very often most painful and distressing,—it will seem as if the foundations of the universe were shaken, the sun and moon darkened out of heaven, the earth reeling, the stars falling,—yet, after a while, if only the heart be pure and truth-loving, if only the soul be waiting patiently on God, there will come a sweet serene light out of the darkness; the clouds will roll away, the face of nature become bright and calm around them, and in God's own Light they will see light. They will see that the foundations of their faith stand fixed and sure in the Eternal Rock of God's unchangeable Wisdom and Love. They will see that that Love is higher and deeper than men's thoughts about it. They will see that God's Spirit has been teaching the hearts of men in all ages, in all countries,—that all great truths which have ever gained a mighty mastery over the minds of men, whether in the Church of Christ or out of it, have come from the Living Word, the Fount of Truth. They will see that the Creeds of the Catholic Church,—the products, no doubt, of ages, when Jewish and Christian forms of thought had been intimately blended with the philosophical systems of Greece and of the East,—and of which

the expressions, therefore, may but imperfectly correspond to the more advanced knowledge and modes of thought of our own times,—do yet shadow forth to us eternal realities of the World Unseen; so that each dogma of the Church, whatever be the form of words in which it is at present expressed, has an underlying basis of substantial Truth. The great work of the Christian Teacher of to-day is to translate the language of the devout men of former ages into that of our own.

But you know that, with few exceptions, the Chief Pastors of our Church have not spoken such words as these. Instead of soothing and calming their Flocks, they have done their utmost to arouse their fears and increase their perplexities. One proclaimed that,—

> All our hopes for eternity, the very foundations of our faith, our nearest and dearest consolations, were taken from us, if one line of that Sacred Book was declared to be unfaithful or untrustworthy.

Another said that—

> Every part of the Bible was so interwoven with the other parts, that to invalidate one portion was to throw discredit on the rest; so that if you can successfully disprove the historical accuracy of the Pentateuch, there will scarcely be anything left in the Bible on which the mind can lay hold for peace and comfort;—

as if the truth of that Divine Teaching, which we read in the Sermon on the Mount, depended in any way upon the 'historical accuracy' of the Pentateuch! Others have said that in the great majority of our most popular Journals and Literature there breathes a spirit of scepticism and unbelief,—we walk in an infected atmosphere,—we draw in from every side the seeds of death,—the 'trail of the Serpent is over it all.' While another, as you know, has told us that in all the mighty movement of the age,—in the wonderful conclusions of Modern Science,—in those grand utterances, by which the gifted men of the present day have made known to their fellow-men the results of their laborious researches,—we are but hearing the sound of doom, the 'echoes of the coming footfall of the Great Antichrist.'

It is true, there were some of higher mind, and deeper learning, and more far-reaching wisdom and foresight, who

strove to counteract these suicidal doings of their brethren. One eminent Bishop of our Church, the Bishop of St David's, has said in his recent Charge :—

> A great part of the events related in the Old Testament has no more apparent connexion with our religion than those of Greek and Roman History. The numbers, migrations, wars, battles, conquests, and reverses of Israel, have nothing in common with the teaching of Christ, with the way of salvation, with the fruits of the Spirit. They belong to a totally different order of subjects. They are not to be confounded with the spiritual revelation contained in the Old Testament, much less with that fulness of grace and truth, which came by Jesus Christ. Such questions must be left to every one's private judgment and feeling, which have the fullest right to decide for each, but not to impose their decisions, as the dictate of an infallible authority, on the consciences of others. Any attempt to erect such facts into articles of faith would be fraught with danger, of irreparable evil to the Church, as well as of immediate hurt to numberless souls.

Our Church has set apart this Sunday in the year for the special consideration of the Holy Scriptures, as appears by the Collect and Epistle of the day. And on this account, though in my former Sermons I have already touched upon the question, I think it well to enter more fully into the subject to-day.

> 'Whatsoever things were written aforetime, were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope.'

It is plain that the Apostle, in speaking of things 'written aforetime,' is confining himself to the Scriptures —that is, the Jewish Scriptures—the New Testament not being yet in existence. You know what these Scriptures are—the 'Canonical' Books—from Genesis to Malachi. You know that they exclude what are called the 'Apocryphal' Books, in which, however, are to be found some Divine passages, as much so as any that we read in some parts of the Canonical writings. You know also that in by far the greater part of Christendom,—I mean, within the

bounds of the Roman and Greek Churches—these same Apocryphal Books are reckoned as 'Canonical.' You may remember, too, that in one of the Epistles of the New Testament, the Epistle of Jude, a quotation is made from another Apocryphal Book, the Book of Enoch, as a genuine part of Holy Scripture; though the greater portion of the Book of Enoch, at least as we now have it, was written, at the very earliest, not long before the birth of our Lord.

But leaving these points, what do we know for certain of the history of those Books, which make up the Canon of the Old Testament? I will answer, not in my own words, but in the words of one of our most learned living clergy, and, let me add, of one who dissents very much from my own views, and is himself a strong and prominent supporter generally—I say not in all its details—of the ecclesiastical system maintained in the Church of South Africa. These words I have extracted from a work* just published by him, when I left the shores of England, and containing the substance of an address which he delivered in Lent of the present year to a large body of the clergy in London, and which he has now published at their request,—prefacing it with these words, which, I need hardly say, will apply to other writings beside his own, *p.* xi:—

> Above all things, I earnestly request my fellow-Christians of every class, who may read these pages, to do so with patience and fearlessness, as in God's sight—even if the course of thought at first seem to them very trying. For, if what is said be all simply and undeniably *true*,—then, to be angry with it, is but to 'fight against God.' . . . . Bitter words, and sneers, and persecutions, however refined, will fail. Let the appeal be to facts—to conscience—to reason. Yet a little while, and we must all give our account to Him who is the Truth.

The following, then, are some of his statements, *pp.*1-19 and 25;

> There are facts connected with the history, character, and contents of the Sacred Volume, about which there

* *The Bible and its Interpreters*, by W. J. Irons, D.D., Vicar of Brompton, and Prebendary of St Paul's, London.

is no doubt, and ought to be no equivocation. To state them is to produce no novelties. Sooner or later, all must do something with them. To admit but half, and wrestle against the other half, is in no way creditable. . . . The facts of Biblical Literature must be faced by all who have to deal with the Christianity of the Future. . . . There is, however, a considerable class of minds capable of receiving and handling facts, as if they meant nothing. . . They make admissions, and then go on as if they had not made them. Such persons, in a sort of self-defence, can exclaim at much which may now be said, 'Why, there is nothing *new* in all this.' They are quite right. The only new thing is, the attempt to make such people *use* the admitted facts.—*p.*1.

It is usual to say that the quotations from the former Scriptures, made by Christ and his Apostles, guarantee the Hebrew Canon. . . . Will this, however, assist us at the present stage of the argument? Has the independent inquirer yet placed the Gospels on such a footing as to justify that strict verbal appeal to their contents, which alone would make them avail as evidence for the Hebrew Canon? And, even taking the existing Gospels, does it appear that our Lord quoted from the Hebrew Scriptures? Did he not use the Septuagint very frequently? and at times employ a version different from both the 'Hebrew Verity' and the Septuagint? . . .

Time may be saved by conceding at once that for the present printed Hebrew text we may trace a fair literary history back to the Middle Ages, with some allowance for the 800 Keri and Chetiv (the read and written variations). The Jews' own copies correspond with ours. But from the oldest examined manuscripts, there are at least a thousand years back to the time of those papyri or parchments used and known by our Lord and his Apostles, even if we had no need to think of the earlier history. . .

But the 'character' used in writing the 'Hebrew' books is ancient, no doubt. . . . In addition, however, to this character, which is Chaldee, there are certain 'points' placed below and about the letters,

[to denote the vowel-sounds and accents]; and without these 'points' it would be difficult to read the Old Testament at all, with any certainty. These 'Masoretic points,' as they are called, have been part of the Hebrew Bible since their general acceptance by the Jews in the tenth century. But they cannot be traced to a higher antiquity than the seventh century of our era. . . . Previous to the *sixth* century, then, the Hebrew Bible—we must face the fact—was read *traditionally*. . . . Two hundred years, at least, before the points were invented, St Jerome, for instance, in his cell at Bethlehem, read the Old Testament, working hard at it with his Jew by his side. His Jew was his 'tradition,' to help him to read his unpointed Bible. . . . Before the time of Jerome, the Hebrew Bible was but little used among Christians. They were to be content with Versions. . . . *p.*19.

The striking fact, which next confronts us, is that in the first century [the age of Christ and His Apostles], the Greek Translation of the Old Testament was more in use among the *Jews* also than the Hebrew, and this had possibly been the case for generations. It seemed even to be thought by some that this Greek Version fixed the sense of some passages of the Hebrew. . . . What is this Greek Version, or Septuagint, as it is called? Who made it? From what originals was it made? And when? And why? and what is its present state? . . .

The story used to be believed that, 270 years or more before Christ, some seventy Jews were employed by Ptolemy Philadelphus to translate 'the Jewish Scripture' into Greek: Josephus says that it was the Pentateuch [only, which they translated]. An account of the miraculous agreement of these 70 Translators, working in 70 separate cells, is found in the letter of Aristeas to Philocrates. . . . But this letter cannot be regarded in the 19th century as 'historical.' We may pass it. Strictly speaking, no one knows who made the Septuagint. No one knows from what copies of the originals any parts of that Version were made. It appears to be a growth of at least two generations; and, as might be expected, the style is not the same throughout. *p.*25.

Let me stop here to remark that this Septuagint Version, from which not only the Apostles, as St Paul, but our Lord himself, 'very frequently' quoted,—which was 'more in use among the Jews in that age than the Hebrew,' and which was therefore, in all probability, 'the Bible,' to which St Paul refers in the Text, when he speaks of 'the Scriptures,'—differs materially in very many places from the Hebrew original, from which our own English Bibles are translated. This is surely enough by itself to show that we are not bound to believe that every line and letter of the Hebrew original—much less of its English Version—is infallibly true. But I proceed with my quotations, *p.*28-31 :—

> One more suggestion, however, is made at times, to assist the difficulties of the case. At a date a little more distant than that of the Septuagint, and standing midway between the Babylonian Captivity and the time of Christ, we have the Samaritan Pentateuch, which some good scholars have thought very valuable. But it has no clear history of its own, and is of no use for the purposes of our present inquiry—as to the *true text of the Hebrew Bible.* Of the Prophets and Psalms, of course, it tells us nothing. . . .
>
> Another slight hiatus, and we come to Ezra: again another historical pause, and we reach the close of the Captivity. We may here think of the Jews as permitted to return from their exile, and some considerable number of them availing themselves of the permission to settle again in their own land. Where *at this time* was their Sacred Book? and of what did it consist? . . .
>
> Then at the return from Babylon, the three latest Prophets, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi, had not begun to prophesy, and must for the present be excepted from the Sacred Collection. . . The Prophets of the Captivity, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, Habakkuk, and Zephaniah, of course formed no part of the pre-Babylonian Canon. . . . If the greater part of the Psalms were written in the days of David and Solomon, yet few scholars would now attribute them all to that era: and, if not, then the book [of Psalms],

as a Canonical whole, *could* not have been what it now is, much before the Captivity.

Rather, I may remark, it is *certain* that some of the Psalms, as the 74th and 79th, and *probable* that many others, were written *during* or *after* the Captivity. But the writer, from whom I quote, goes on to say, *p.*31-34 :—

> Of the History, little can be said with literary certainty. When, then, we meet with a dim report among the Jews that the 'great men of the Synagogue' gathered together their Sacred Books after their National Return from Babylon, it is not easy to appreciate the idea. That some effort of the kind would be made would seem so probable, that the report is a very natural one to have arisen. Yet it is noticeable that there is no real testimony on the subject. . . .
> Between the time of Ezra and Moses, again there is a space of about 1000 years. The history of that time had been written, we are frequently told, by Prophets; and the History must be the thread of the whole religious life of the nation. . . . The writer of the book of Chronicles, who lived after the Captivity (2 Chron. xxxvi. 23), gives us [certain] statements of the *authorities* referred to for the history of his people. But he does not say who was authorised to draw up the summaries of the story, which now are called 'Books of Samuel' and 'Kings,' or his own 'Chronicles.' In fact, the writings of Samuel, Nathan, Gad, Abija, Shemaiah, Iddo, Azariah, Hanani, Jehu, Elijah, and Chosai, and the Chronicles of Isaiah and others (all referred to as the *literary* basis of the National History), *have perished without exception.* The outlines which survive are by another hand, and *have been drawn with a design of their own.* Nothing can exceed the plainness, with which *the sacred author of the Chronicles acknowledges that they, who seek mere History, must look for it elsewhere.* He is *writing for another purpose,*— being guided in a way which he does not pause to explain or guard against misconception.
> The results are simply and undeniably these—that after the Jewish Captivity in Babylon (within a hundred years of that event) the merely *historical,* as distinct

> from the *sacred*, records of the nation—having no doubt been examined—*disappear*, and the *religious Books*, called Samuel, Kings, and Chronicles, *are found in their present form*. The ingenuity of popular theology, among both Jews and Christians, has attributed to Ezra the task of 'editing' the whole work. But there is no proof that he did it; nor is it of the least consequence to us *who* did—unless we are anxious to rest our faith on some one man.

The writer might perhaps have said that it is certain that Ezra could *not* have done it,—that the Books of Chronicles contain internal evidence to show that they were composed long after Ezra's time. But you will see that he draws a distinction between the '*merely historical*' records of the Jewish Nation, containing the actual facts of their History, as recorded by contemporary writers,—which have all 'perished, without exception,'—and the 'sacred records,' the 'religious Books,' the Books of Samuel, Kings, and Chronicles, which 'are by other hands,'—which '*have been drawn with a design of their own*,'—which '*are written for another purpose*' than to teach us History. This distinction is of the utmost importance, and I beg you to observe that it is not made by one of the Modern School of 'sceptical writers,' as they are called. It is made, doubtless, by a learned man, one who is well acquainted with the facts of the case, and who desires not to shut his eyes to them, and who has his own method of trying to escape from the difficulties of his position, but one who has been, all his life long, a warm and zealous supporter of the highest ecclesiastical pretensions,—nay, whose very resource, in the face of these intellectual perplexities, is to fall back upon the authority of 'the Church.' He says, *p.*148,—

> HIM whom we ignorantly worship the Church 'declares unto us' by Her Creeds, Her Sacraments, Her Hierarchy, and in them we *feel* Her power so to teach; just as in holy Scripture we feel that there is a message that concerns us, and which the Church alone has always understood.

But now that an authority, so free from the suspicion of heretical teaching, has made the remarkably distinct and outspoken statement just quoted,—

Nothing can exceed the plainness, with which the sacred author of the Chronicles acknowledges that they, who seek mere History, must look for it elsewhere,—

I may venture also, I hope, without fear of censure, to say that this is undoubtedly true—that at least, whatever 'acknowledgment' of his 'purpose' in writing may have been made by the author of the Chronicles, of which I confess I see no sign whatever,—yet 'those, who seek mere History, must look for it elsewhere.' The two Books of Chronicles, in a very great part of their contents, are certainly not History—they are not historically true—they are written, as this learned Divine observes, '*with a design of their own*';—and that 'design' is, evidently, to blot out as much as possible from the earlier history of the people, as it is written in the older Books of Samuel and Kings (which, no doubt, contain much genuine historical matter), the plain signs which those Books exhibit, that the Law of Moses—the laws of the Pentateuch—were habitually disregarded by the very best of the Kings of Judah, and to represent them as in force all along:—the Levites and Priests, to which body the writer most probably himself belonged,* are placed by him from the very first in the highest positions, and wield even in David's days almost all the power in the Church and in the State.

This fact—I mean that of the unhistorical character of the narrative in the Chronicles—is one of the greatest importance, and I think it right to dwell a little longer this morning upon it. For you cannot possibly acquire a clear idea of the real History of Israel, from the time of the conquest of Canaan down to the Captivity, unless your minds are disabused of the traditionary notion, as to the infallible accuracy of every line and letter in the History of the Chronicler, while yet his statements repeatedly contradict the statements of the older Books and even his own. You may easily satisfy yourselves on this point, by

* The Chronicler would seem to have been a Levita himself, and very probably a *chorister*, since he speaks so frequently of the Levitical *choristers* and *doorkeepers*, e.g. 1Ch.vi.16,&c., ix.14-29, xv.16-24,27,28, xvi.4-42, xxiii.5, xxv, xxvi.1,12-19, 2Ch.v.12,&c., vii.6, viii.14, xx.19,21, xxiii.4,13,18,&c., xxix.25-28,30, xxx.21,&c., xxxi.2,11-18, xxxiv.12,13, xxxv.15. This array of passages indicates his partiality for these bodies, and (as an examination of them will show) especially for the former.

merely reading your Bibles carefully, with open eyes and clear understandings, employing a Bible with marginal references, and making use of them. But I shall set before you a few instances of the phenomena to which I refer.

You will find that the Chronicler never gives a hint of David's great sins of adultery and murder, nor of Solomon's taking many heathen wives, and of their turning away his heart from the Living God: he says nothing of his going after 'Ashtaroth, the goddess of the Zidonians, and after Milcom, the abomination of the Ammonites,'—of his—

> 'building an high place for Chemosh, the abomination of Moab, in the hill that is before Jerusalem, and for Molech, the abomination of the children of Ammon.'

Whereas the writer of the Book of Kings tells us that Abijah, the son of Rehoboam,—

> 'walked in all the sins of his father, which he had done before him, and his heart was not perfect with the Lord his God, as the heart of David his father,' 1K.xv.3,—

and mentions only that 'there was war between Abijah and Jeroboam,' *v.*7, the Chronicler, writing centuries afterwards, says not a word about Abijah's wickedness, but makes him lead out a host of '400,000 chosen men' against '800,000 chosen men of Jeroboam, mighty men of valour,' 2Ch.xiii.3. He is described as addressing this immense host of 800,000 men in most pious language, declaring that in Judah the Law was strictly obeyed,—at all events, that the Priests and Levites were busied in sacred things:—

> 'As for us, the Lord is our God, and we have not forsaken Him; and the Priests, which minister unto the Lord, are the sons of Aaron, and the Levites wait upon their business; and they burn unto the Lord every morning and every evening burnt sacrifices and sweet incense; shewbread also set they in order upon the pure table, and the candlestick of gold with the lamps thereof, to burn every evening; for we keep the charge of the Lord our God; but ye have forsaken Him. And, behold! God Himself is with us for our captain, and his Priests with sounding trumpets to cry alarm against you. O children of Israel, fight ye not

against the Lord God of your fathers; for ye shall not prosper.' *v.*10-12.

However, they did fight, and in this one battle, we are told, Abijah's 400,000 warriors slew of Jeroboam's 800,000, *five hundred thousand* * chosen men!

Again, the older writer says that, in the time of the pious King Asa, the idolatrous 'high-places' *were not* taken away out of Judah, 1K.xv.14; whereas the Chronicler says that they *were* taken away, 2Ch.xiv.3-5, though he also copies the older notice, but modifies it by saying that they were 'not taken away *out of Israel*,' 2Ch.xvi.17, with which kingdom, of course, Asa, the King of Judah, had nothing to do. He does the same in the case of the pious Jehoshaphat, of whom he writes, 'His heart was lifted up in the ways of Jehovah; moreover he *took away* the high-places and groves out of Judah,' 2Ch.xvii.6. But the older writer says that, in Jehoshaphat's reign, 'the high-places were *not* taken away, the people sacrificed and burnt incense yet in the high-places,' 1K.xxii.43. And this notice also is copied by the Chronicler, in direct contradiction to his own previous statement, and this time without the addition of the words 'out of Israel,'—for he says,—

'Howbeit the high-places *were not* taken away; for as yet the people had not prepared their hearts unto the God of their fathers.' 2Ch.xx.33.

But most remarkable is the manner, in which throughout his narrative the Chronicler pushes forward the Priests and Levites into prominent positions of power and influence, of which we find no trace in the older and more genuine history. Thus, the Book of Samuel gives not the least indication of the tribe of Levi having been distinguished in any way, for their numbers, dignity, or influence, in the time of David, and especially is silent as to any great body of Priests and Levites having been present on the occasion of bringing up the Ark of God to Jerusalem. On the contrary, this supposition is distinctly negatived by the facts actually stated. Instead of the Priests covering, and the Levites bearing, the Ark,—as the Law enjoined, as they

* The total loss of the Allied Army in the Battle of Waterloo, including 'British, Germans, Hanoverians, Brunswickers, Prussians, and Belgians,' was 4,172 men. *Alison's Hist. of Europe*, xix., p. 372.

are said to have done throughout the long marches in the wilderness, and as they surely would have done had they really been present,—we read that the Ark was put upon a 'new cart,' and 'Uzzah and Ahio, the sons of Abinadab, drave the new cart . . . and Ahio went before the Ark,' 2S.vi.3,4, while Uzzah evidently walked behind or beside it, and so put out his hand, we are told, to stay it, when the oxen shook it, and met with his death while so doing. Not a word is said about Priests and Levites in the whole narrative.

If, however, we turn to the Chronicler's report of the very same transaction, we perceive at once a wonderful difference. Here the Priest and Levite occupy the most prominent place, and fill the whole foreground of the picture, appearing everywhere in great force and activity, and yet in such a way as to throw complete discredit upon the whole account, as a piece of 'mere History.' Thus we are first told that, among those who 'came to David to Hebron to turn the kingdom of Saul to him,' there were 4,600 Levites and 3,700 Priests, and with them 'Zadok, a young man mighty of valour, and of his father's house twenty-and-two captains,' 1Ch.xii.26-28. Then we read that David consulted with the 'captains of thousands and hundreds, and with every leader,'—with Zadok, therefore, and his 'twenty-two captains' of the 'sons of Aaron' among the rest,—about the manner of bringing up the Ark, and gathered all Israel together for the purpose, including, we must suppose, above all others, these 8,300 'Priests and Levites,' or some large proportion of them. Nay, they were to be expressly summoned on this occasion:—

> 'And David said unto all the congregation of Israel, If it seem good unto you, and that it be of Jehovah our God, let us send abroad unto our brethren everywhere that are left in all the land of Israel, and with them also to the *Priests and Levites*, which are in their cities and suburbs, that they may gather themselves unto us; and let us bring again the Ark of our God to us.' 1Ch.xiii.2,3.

And yet, even according to the Chronicler, after all this consultation and gathering, David makes use of mere laymen—not of Priests and Levites—to remove the Ark in the first instance. For it is only when warned by the death

of Uzzah, that David is made by the Chronicler to say,—

> 'None ought to carry the Ark of God but the Levites; for them hath Jehovah chosen to carry the Ark of God and to minister unto him for ever . . . For, because ye did it not at first, Jehovah our God made a breach upon us, for that we sought Him not after the due order. So the Priests and the Levites sanctified themselves to bring up the Ark of Jehovah the God of Israel. And the children of the Levites bare the Ark of God upon their shoulders with the staves thereon, as Moses commanded, according to the word of Jehovah.' 1Ch. xv.2,13-15.

And the numbers of the 'Priests and Levites' who attended on this occasion are carefully registered—120 of one family, 220 of another, &c., altogether 862 Levites and 2 Priests, 1Ch.xv.4-12. Thus even on this *second* gathering of the Priests and Levites, when they are supposed to have been already warned by the death of Uzzah of the sin committed on the first occasion, in employing mere laymen to move the Ark,—when 'all Israel' had been *again* summoned, xiii.5,xv.3, and the 'sons of Aaron and the Levites' *again* assembled, xiii.2,xv.4, to take their part in this great religious ceremony, only 2 Priests and 862 Levites attended, out of 3,700 Priests and 4,600 Levites, who had come to David ten years before, for a mere civil object, to make him King at Hebron! Yet, though he had this immense body of Priests and Levites at his disposal,—though he had knowledge (as is implied) of their sacred calling, and had summoned them for the express purpose of 'bringing again the Ark of God,'—still, according to the Chronicler's own admissions, David actually employed mere laymen to handle the Ark upon the first occasion!

The whole story is obviously a mass of contradictions, and the traditionary view of its accuracy involves the most manifest absurdities. For that view would require us to believe that David, the pious king 'after God's own heart,'—after having made all these preparations with the most sincere desire to do the will of Jehovah,—having the Pentateuch in his hands, which he daily studied, and its laws written upon his heart,—yet wholly neglected to make the proper use of the Levites, according to the express direc-

tions laid down in the Sacred Book! What! Can it be believed that, even if he *did* forget them, not one out of so many hundreds or even thousands of the tribe of Levi, —not one single Priest or Levite—not one Prophet, such as Nathan or Gad, who were at that time living and doubtless were present at his side—came forward to warn the devout King, that no man of any other tribe whatever should presume to intrude upon the sacred prerogative of the Priests and Levites, 'lest he die,'—nay, rather lest there should break forth 'a plague among the children of Israel'? N.viii.19.

It is plain, then, that the account given by the Chronicler of the number of Priests and Levites in David's days, and of the part which they took on the occasion of bringing-up the Ark, cannot be historically true: 'they, who seek mere History, must look for it elsewhere.' It owes its existence, in fact, like many other passages in his narrative, to a special 'design' and 'purpose' of the writer, to a desire on his part to magnify the office and dignity of the Levites his brethren, and to exhibit, as common in those old times, a degree of conformity to the Mosaic Law, which, as the more authentic History teaches us, was not then practised.

Thus, once more, he tells us, 1Ch.xxiii.3-5, that, when David was old, the Levites were numbered, 38,000,—of whom 24,000 were to set forward the work of the House of Jehovah, 6,000 were *officers and judges*, 4,000 were gatekeepers, 4,000 choristers; that is, he reckons 24,000 ministering Levites, 4,000 gatekeepers, and 4,000 choristers, for a small tent, probably not so large as this church of St Peter's, which contains about 2,000 square feet, just exactly half the size of the Temple of Solomon, and might hold, if crowded, perhaps, 300 people! In another place he tells us that 1,700 Levites of one family, the Hebronites, 'were officers among them of Israel on this side Jordan westward, in all the business of Jehovah, and in the service of the King,' 1Ch.xxvi.30; and he adds that in the same Levite family there were '2,700 chief fathers, whom King David made rulers over the Reubenites, the Gadites, and the half-tribe of Manasseh, for every matter pertaining to God and affairs of the king,' *v.* 31,32. So that we have here 2,700 chief fathers and 1,700

officers—altogether 4,400 rulers—out of one single family of the tribe of Levi! In short, as I have said, almost all the business of the State, as well as of the Church, seems, according to this writer, to have been carried on in David's days by Levites. Yet the older Books of Samuel and Kings make not the slightest reference to these dignities; but in the list of David's and Solomon's officers, 2 S.viii. 15-18, 1K.iv.1-16, even the two Chief Priests are ranked low down in the scale.

But I forbear. I have said enough to show you how the truth stands in respect of these Books of Chronicles; and you will find much more of the same kind for yourselves, if you will only thoughtfully read the narrative, and compare it with what is written in other places. It is plain that we must take with caution the statements of this writer, especially where they concern the Levites, and not receive them at once as communicating facts of actual History.

But, if this be so, it may be asked, 'What advantage hath the Bible over other books? Or what profit is there in the reading of the Scriptures?' I answer in the language of St Paul, in reply to similar questions applied to another, but really a kindred, subject,—'Much every way.' The Bible still contains the Word of God: the Scriptures are still the 'oracles of God.' They teach us about God and His doings: they speak messages from God to the soul: they are still 'profitable for doctrine, reproof, correction, instruction in righteousness': they are a gracious gift of God's Providence, that we 'through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope.' The time is now too far spent for entering upon the consideration of this part of the subject. But I trust to do so this evening, and to show that the Scriptures, such as they really are, —not such as what we might wish them to be,—are full of Divine consolation,—more truly so than if they had been dictated by miraculous interference, as the traditionary view supposes, so as to be in every line and letter infallibly true,—to show, in one word, that, in providing for our comfort and support by means of the Scriptures, just exactly as they are, 'the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men.'

V.

THE COMFORT OF THE SCRIPTURES.

PREACHED ON SUNDAY EVENING, DEC. 10, 1865, IN THE CATHEDRAL, MARITZBURG.

ROM. XV. 4—7.

'WHATSOEVER THINGS WERE WRITTEN AFORETIME, WERE WRITTEN FOR OUR LEARNING, THAT WE THROUGH PATIENCE AND COMFORT OF THE SCRIPTURES MIGHT HAVE HOPE. NOW THE GOD OF PATIENCE AND CONSOLATION GRANT YOU TO BE LIKEMINDED TOWARD ONE ANOTHER, ACCORDING TO CHRIST JESUS; THAT YE MAY WITH ONE MIND AND ONE MOUTH GLORIFY GOD, EVEN THE FATHER OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST. WHEREFORE RECEIVE YE ONE ANOTHER, AS CHRIST ALSO RECEIVED US, TO THE GLORY OF GOD.'

THIS morning I spoke generally about the Holy Scriptures of the Old Testament; and I quoted some passages at length upon the subject from a very recent work by an eminent and learned English Divine, a Prebendary of the Metropolitan Church of St Paul's in London, and one whose orthodoxy has never been questioned,—at least, who cannot be for a moment suspected of any leaning to the teaching of the 'Modern School' of theologians,—who disagrees strongly with some of the views which I have myself expressed, and heartily supports the ecclesiastical system, which is being developed in the Church of South Africa. From this book I extracted some very remarkable statements, describing the great obscurity—nay, the absolute darkness—in which are involved the history and origin and authorship of most of the Canonical Books of the Old Testament. I will now add some other statements of the same writer, which I also very willingly adopt as my own:—

It is assumed that God's vital message to conscience is definitely made *in writing*,—writing being undeniably an artificial, varying, and in its ancient form most precarious, way of conveying ideas to those only *who have been taught to read*,—ninety-nine persons out of every hundred since the world began, having been unable to read. Such an idea of 'Revelation' probably involves a contradiction in terms.—*p.*63.

It is assumed that the 'Written Word' is not only a Divine message to some men, but covers and includes Truth, so as to be absolutely conterminous with all Revelation from God to Man,—hereby shutting out from authority, and independent truthfulness, everything beside the 'Written Word,' and *including, as of equal certainty and validity, all that lies within it.* This assumption is suicidal, as it affirms a 'Revelation' to conscience, and yet *denies conscience*, at the same time.—*p.*63.

We have said enough to convince any, who are looking sincerely for opinions in 'Scripture only,' that the New Testament is silent as to the theory that IT was INSPIRED to be a 'written Word' of such and such extent, for the sole guidance of men as to God's Revealed Will. The straining, which we see, of a phrase or two, here and there, into an assertion of 'INSPIRATION,' from some unenumerated writings of St Paul, is in itself sufficient to show to what straits the maintainers of this theory are reduced.—*p.*92.

Let it not be thought, above all, that there has been any exaggeration as to the details of the history of the written Word. . . . For indeed a large part of the difficulty, which besets the investigation of this literature, has been barely glanced at. . . . We have but lightly touched the circumstances, that the Bible really consists of about fifty treatises or tracts, each of which has or had a *history of its own*, an authorship, occasion, date, structure, transmission, and difficulties, *of its own*. . . . We have but *hinted* how the books of the Hebrew part of Scripture have all, in some way, been reduced to a kind of *uniformity*, considerably veiling the difference of both style and language which must have existed at first,—differences, for in-

> stance, between the utterances of Noah, Abraham, or Balaam, and those of Solomon or Malachi. To find, for instance, as we do, a dialogue which took place in Paradise, and a canticle written 3,000 years afterwards in Jerusalem, both recorded now in those same square Chaldee letters, and pointed now on the same Masoretic system,—to be stopped at a kind of great literary precipice, *e. g.* like the Babylonian Captivity, and told to 'investigate' with the few materials at our disposal,—to have not dissimilar occupation in dealing in detail with the Gospel of St Matthew, the Epistle to the Hebrews, or the Apocalypse,—would open a multitude of difficulties which we have not pressed.—*p.*108.

And he sums up his observations on what he calls the 'Popular Theory' with these very noticeable words, *p.*39:—

> We do not hesitate to say that any reasonable being, who would accept the Scriptures at all, *must* take them on some other ground than that which identifies the Written Word with God's Revelation. A more hopeless, 'carnal,' and eventually sceptical position it is impossible to conceive.

I need hardly remind you that in this very Church, not long ago, it was asserted that 'the Scriptures of the Old Testament *are* the Word of the Living God,'—not in the sense in which we all speak of the Bible as the Word of God, because it teaches us about the things of God, because we hear God's Voice in it,—as we speak of this Building as being the House of God, because we realize, or hope and desire to realize, God's special Presence in it, without meaning for a moment to say that each stone and bench of it is of Divine workmanship,—not, I say, in this popular sense, in which we might any of us use the expression, and in which our Church does sometimes use it, but in the highest sense of all, in the very sense which is here so strongly condemned, by one who knew the facts which others ignore,—in that sense which 'identifies the Written Word with God's Revelation.'

And here I may remind you that this author does not stand alone in condemning the use of such language, or in pointing out the folly and the danger of using it. The

Bishop of St David's, one of our most eminent and learned living prelates, speaking of an expression of my own, which the Convocation of the Province of Canterbury had censured as 'involving errors of the gravest and most dangerous character, subversive of Faith in the Bible as the Word of God,' has written in his recently-published Charge as follows:—

> No doubt the expression indicated that the author made a distinction between the Bible and the Word of God, and considered the two terms as not precisely equivalent or absolutely interchangeable. . . . . And there is certainly high authority for this distinction. Among the numerous passages of the New Testament, in which the phrase, *the Word of God*, occurs, there is not one in which it signifies the Bible, or in which that word could be substituted for it without manifest absurdity. But, even in our Articles and Formularies, there are several, in which the two terms do not appear to be treated as synonymous. . . . . If the Word of God is to be found nowhere but in Holy Writ, not only would no other Christian literature be properly called sacred, but the Bible itself would be degraded to a dead and barren letter, and would not be a living spring of Divine Truth.

But the writer, from whom I have so largely quoted, shows also that he is not only aware of the state of complete ignorance, in which we are as to the formation of the Hebrew Canon of Scripture,—as to the time when, and the men by whom, the different Books of the Old Testament were collected, approved, copied, and edited, most probably with many alterations of the original Text;—he says also, as we heard this morning, that the historical books cannot be depended upon as History,—that the true, original, narratives 'have perished without exception,'—that the present accounts have been composed 'with a design of their own,' have been written 'for another purpose' than to teach us historical facts,—that, in particular,

> —nothing can exceed the plainness, with which the sacred author of the Chronicles acknowledges that they, who seek mere History, must seek for it elsewhere.

And I showed you plainly, by various instances, that this assertion is undoubtedly true,—that, at least, whether the Chronicler has 'acknowledged' his 'purpose,' or not, his books are most assuredly written 'with a design of his own,' a double design,—first, to make it appear that all along in Israel, or rather in the kingdom of Judah, and specially in the palmy days of David and Solomon, a strict attention was paid to the commands of the Mosaic Law,—in direct opposition to the facts which we observe in the older and more authentic narratives of the Books of Samuel, Judges, and Kings,—and secondly, to represent the Levitical body, to whom he himself most probably belonged, as very numerous and influential, and as intrusted with the highest offices, as invested in fact with almost all the power, in the Church and in the State.

I laid great stress upon this point, and begged you earnestly to read your own Bibles, and satisfy yourselves that the truth is just as this learned Divine and I myself have said. And this I did, not only, nor mainly, with the desire that you might thus be convinced, by your own examination of these Books of Chronicles, that they are indeed full of inconsistencies and contradictions, and, whatever value they may have for us, cannot be regarded as teaching 'mere History'—but especially because it is impossible for any one to obtain a clear idea of the early History of Israel, who comes to the study of it, prepossessed with the notion of the historical accuracy of the Books of Chronicles. They are the chief cause of much of the perplexity and uncertainty, which confuse our notions of that earlier history. The contrast between the idea of the condition of Israel in David's time, which we should gather from these records, and that which we should derive from the Books of Samuel and Kings, is so extraordinary, that it is quite confounding to the ordinary reader, if only he reads attentively, and makes it impossible for him to form any clear conception to himself of the state of things in those days.

But what shall now be said of the *earliest* histories—the histories of Mosaic time—as we find them recorded in the Pentateuch and the Book of Joshua? You probably know what I have said of them, and I have given plainly my reasons for saying it. The Book of Judges contains, as I

believe, some genuine historical matter of a very ancient date, perhaps among the most ancient in the Bible,—though this Book also has been re-touched and modified by some later editor. But the Pentateuch and Book of Joshua are the products of a later time by some centuries than that which they profess to describe. They are the work of different authors in different ages,—Deuteronomy having been written in the later days of the kingdom of Judah. And though based upon real acts,—the residence of Israel for a long time in Egypt, under very painful circumstances, their deliverance out of it under some leader, such as Moses, and their conquest of the land of Canaan,—yet, as the learned Prebendary says of the Books of Chronicles, so must I say of the Pentateuch and Book of Joshua, 'They, who seek mere History, must look for it elsewhere.'

Or rather they will find History here, most interesting and instructive History, if they will look for the History of the times when the different portions of these Books were written, and not that of the times which they profess to describe. Regarded in this light, every passage in the Pentateuch is full of meaning. We obtain many a glimpse by means of its contents into the deep vista of the past. We see what men were thinking of, what they imagined, what they aimed at, what they were doing, in those very early days in which they lived;—for, though not so ancient as the days of Moses, I do not myself doubt, and I believe that I have given satisfactory reasons for concluding, that the greater portion of the Pentateuch in its present form dates as far back as the times of Samuel, David, and Solomon. Yet it is true that some learned men think otherwise, and ascribe its composition to a much later date. And the Jews themselves had a strange tradition about the restoration of the Pentateuch by Ezra, after it had been burnt at the time of the Captivity. This tradition stands recorded in the Apocryphal Second Book of Esdras, where Esdras, or Ezra, is introduced as saying, xiv.21,22:

> *Thy Law is burnt:* therefore no man knoweth the things that are done of Thee, or the works that shall begin. But, if I have found grace before Thee, send the Holy Ghost into me, and I shall write all that hath been done in the world since the beginning,

> which were written in Thy Law, that men may find Thy path, and that they, which live in the latter days, may live.

And Ezra says that his prayer was heard, and he received a command to retire into a private place with five men, 'ready to write swiftly,' and many 'tables of box-wood to write upon.'

> So I took the five men, as He commanded me, and we went into the field, and remained there. And the next day, behold, a voice called me, 'Esdras, open thy mouth, and drink that I give thee to drink.' Then opened I my mouth, and behold! He reached me a full cup, which was full as it were with water, but the colour of it was like fire. And I took it and drank: and, when I had drunk of it, my heart uttered understanding, and wisdom grew in my breast; for my spirit strengthened my memory, and my mouth was opened and shut no more. The Highest gave understanding unto the five men, and they wrote the wonderful visions of the night that were told, which they knew not; and they sat forty days, and they wrote in the day, and at night they ate bread. v.37-42.

In this way Ezra is supposed, in the tradition of the Jews of that age, to have recovered, by a miraculous strengthening of his memory, the very identical words of the original Pentateuch, which he once knew by heart, and now was enabled to remember. And several of the ancient Fathers seemed to have fully believed this strange story. Thus Clement of Alexandria says:

> When the Scriptures had been destroyed in the captivity of Nebuchadnezzar, in the time of Artaxerxes, the king of the Persians, Esdras the Levite, the priest, having become inspired, renewed again and produced prophetically all the ancient Scriptures.

And Irenæus says:—

> In the time of Artaxerxes, the king of the Persians, He inspired Esdras, the priest of the tribe of Levi, to set in order again all the words of the former prophets, and restore to the people the legislation by Moses.

And Jerome:—

> Whether you choose to say that Moses was the author of the Pentateuch, or Esdras the renewer of the work, I make no objection.

Many other traditions among the Jews point to Ezra as having done much towards collecting and arranging the Books of the Old Testament,—those, at least, which were written before his time. But we know nothing certainly about this: 'there is no proof,' as the learned Prebendary says, 'that he did it.' And, even if we allow that Ezra did all which is ascribed to him, yet then, as Dr Irons very justly observes, *p.*40,—

> It is on the gigantic gifts and inspiration of the transcribers in Ezra's day, that we are really depending,—gifts and inspiration, which yet are a mere hypothesis, of which the possessors tell us no single word! And before Ezra's day we are thus owning, unmistakeably, that the literary history of the Old Testament is lost! Let all those, who would identify this with God's entire Revelation, see to what they have brought us!

No! brethren, let us not do this. I agree entirely with this author that 'a more hopeless, carnal, and eventually sceptical position, it is impossible to conceive,' than that 'which identifies the Written Word with God's Revelation' of Himself to man. And, because I believe it to be so unsound and dangerous, I have done my best, and shall still do my best, God helping me, to set you free from it, by showing you a 'more excellent way,' in which you may continue to regard the Scriptures as a Gift of God, a precious Witness of His Love to Man.

In the language of St Paul in the text I affirm, 'Whatsoever things were written aforetime were *written for our learning:*' he does not say they are all infallibly true. With all its imperfections,—with all our ignorance of its past history, of the age, origin, authorship, of its different parts,—with all the certainty to which we have arrived, through the researches of Modern Criticism, that very much of the traditionary teaching about these points, however confidently maintained, is yet altogether unfounded, and in fact untrue,—with all our perception of

the defective character of many parts of the Bible, both when regarded in themselves, and when regarded as historical documents,—with all our knowledge of the inconsistencies and contradictions, which betray themselves upon a close and careful study of the Five Books of Moses and the Two Books of Chronicles,—yet the Bible remains the Book of the pious heart, the Book of Books, which the overruling Providence of God has 'caused to be written for our learning.' There is no other Book to which we can turn for such Divine Teaching, concentrated in such a narrow compass,—no other Book which contains such variety of mental and spiritual food, for the necessities of living, labouring, suffering, and dying men.

But the very essence of the strength and support, which we really receive from the Bible, consists just exactly in this, that it is what it really is—a thoroughly human book, the work of human beings like ourselves, full of weakness, error, ignorance, infirmity, yet inspired with Divine Light and Life from above,—of men in whose hearts the Living Word was speaking, to whose spirit Great Truths had been revealed by God's Spirit, whose hands have been the agents in God's gracious Providence to minister to us the Word of Life. The wise maxims of that olden time, contained in the Book of Proverbs, link the present age with the past, and show that the human race has been essentially the same during the last 3,000 years of its History. The early attempts at History, the writers of which record, with the simplicity of childhood, the first imaginings of thoughtful men about the Earth's formation and history, and mingle with traditionary lore and actual fact,—especially with the events which really belonged to the age in which they lived, not to that which they profess to describe,—the legends and mythical stories of a hoar antiquity, yet tell us how men were moved by the Holy Ghost in those days, how they were 'feeling after God' and 'finding' Him, how the light shone clearer and clearer upon their minds, as the Day-Star of Eternal Truth rose higher and higher upon them. The Prophecies when regarded, not as mere predictions* of future events, but—as they mostly were—as

* 'It has been doubted, and becomes a fair matter of inquiry, whether there is in all the Hebrew Scripture one such distinct prediction of the remote Future which concerns us, as the natural mind would ask. As to the carnal, and fre-

the powerful preachings of noble-hearted men, who stood forth amidst shame, and scorn, and spitting, to witness for God's Truth against the sins of their times, will satisfy us that in that early age, as well as this, the Prophet was often at war with his brother Prophets, with the King, and with the Priest,—that then, as now, the true Servant of God had to bear his Cross and be 'perfected through suffering,' —had to say with Jeremiah,—

> 'Wo is me, my mother, that thou hast borne me a man of strife and a man of contention to the whole earth! I have neither lent on usury, nor men have lent to me on usury; yet every one of them doth curse me.'

The Psalms, in all their varied utterances, speak to us of men in whose hearts the same human thoughts were striving, the same hopes and fears were dwelling, the same gracious Spirit was operating, three thousand years ago, as now. As Dr Irons has well said, *p.*140:—

> They ring through our inner nature everywhere: and joy, and sorrow, and penitence, and hope, and nearness to the Living God, *will* find thrilling expression in every page.

In this way the Bible becomes to us a human book, though a book full of Divine Life, in which the thoughts of other hearts are opened to us, of men who lived in the ages long ago, and in circumstances very different from ours. And, for those who devoutly study it in this spirit, there will be ever increasing joy and consolation in beholding how face answereth to face, under the teaching of the self-same Spirit,—how the heart of man is really one in its religious consciousness,—in its deep desires which nothing of this world can satisfy, in its sense of sin which can only be relieved by confession and repentance, in its assurance of Fatherly forgiving Mercy, when sin is confessed and forsaken.

> 'When I kept silence, my bones waxed old through my roaring all the day long; I acknowledged my sin unto Thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid. I said

quently immoral, idea of mere prognostic, that, at all events, is not the Christian idea.'—*The Bible and its Interpreters, p.* 125.

I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord, and Thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin.' Ps.xxxii.3,5.

Throughout the Scriptures is this wonderful power exhibited, by which, with a few simple words, the springs of life within our own hearts are touched, and the whole inner being is stirred, and we 'taste the good Word of God and the powers of the world to come.' The mighty voice of some great Prophet is still heard delivering its burden of righteous judgment and woe, against the national sins of modern times, as well as those of the days of old—

'Shall I not visit for these things? saith the Lord; shall not my soul be avenged on such a nation as this?'

The plaintive cries of some unknown Psalmist, his meek resignation, and patient hope,—or it may be his song of praise and thanksgiving,—still find their echoes in all true hearts, and are breathed afresh, day by day, from a thousand lips, as the most natural utterances of human beings, 'in all times of their wealth, in all times of their tribulation.'

Is it not thus indeed with us all? Do we not feel that there are living words in the Bible, which come home to us with a power, which no multitude of signs and wonders can strengthen, no diminution of them can impair? And are we not sure that those words, with which our own spirits have been fed from our youth up until now, are quite independent of all the results of criticism? Yes, truly,—

'the Word of God is quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.'

Thank God! we have no need to 'examine the grounds,' and to 'weigh the evidence' of miracle and prophecy, in order to believe that in the Bible we have a record of Divine Revelation, a Revelation of the Will of God to Man. But then we feel at once that the above description of the 'Word of God' cannot possibly be applied to the mere letter of the histories in Genesis, or to the account of the details of the construction of the Tabernacle in Exodus, or to the minute directions for sacrifice in Leviticus, or to the records of the

numberings and marchings in Numbers,—to the wars and conflicts in Joshua, Judges, Samuel, Kings, — to the genealogies in Ezra, Nehemiah, and Chronicles.

I repeat, then, 'the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men.' The very fact that these 'things, which were written aforetime,' were written by frail and fallible men, compassed with infirmity and ignorance, men like unto ourselves, is the very thing which helps to strengthen and comfort us, when we see that it is One and the same Good Spirit, that was teaching them three thousand years ago, Who is teaching us now. If the writers of the Bible had been differently situated from ourselves,—if their writings had been miraculously preserved from all error,—if every word of proverb, history, prophecy, psalmody, had been divinely protected from any possibility of sharing the common lot of our imperfect, careworn, struggling, humanity—had been dictated by supernatural influence, so as to be eternally, infallibly true—ah! how much of our comfort would have been lost! Then, indeed, the Bible would not have been given to us, as a source of living strength for feeble and faltering, warring and contending, often downcast and falling, men. We might learn, indeed, if the traditionary view were true,—we might learn, when we read the Bible, that once, in the days of old, two or three thousand years ago, a certain small number of men of the Jewish race were specially singled out to be the recipients of a peculiar Divine Inspiration, which was not granted to any of their fellow-men—which will never be granted to any one of us. We might be ready to believe what they had written: on their authority, as specially accredited messengers from God, we might accept the Divine Promises, which their words convey to us, and find some comfort in the thought, that once and again in the history of the world, in the course of these thousand years of Jewish History, the Great God above had vouchsafed to speak Eternal, Infallible, Truth to one and another of our brethren, from whom the rest of the human race must gather it as best they may. But then rise before us the horrible phantoms of Modern Criticism. One honest determination, to look closely into the question of the age and authorship of the different Books, will

shatter all our confidence. We shall see that in many cases they cannot possibly have been written by the authors whose names they bear, and to whom we have supposed them to belong,—that most of the Books of the Old Testament have manifestly been retouched by different authors,—that very frequently the statements of one Book are contradicted by another Book, or even by itself. At once the miserable cloud of scepticism rises up to dim the brightness of our hope, if it does not altogether darken it; and we close the Book, shuddering with a painful misgiving, and feeling that the iron of unbelief has entered into the soul.

Such is the experience of many—too many—who have realised painfully the words of the author whom I have quoted, that the position, which 'identifies the Written Word with God's Revelation,' is 'hopeless, carnal, and eventually sceptical.' This writer falls back upon the 'Church,' by which he means, as he tells us, the Church, with 'Her Creeds, Her Sacraments, Her Hierarchy.' When you ask him 'What is the Church?' he answers, 'the Society *commonly received* as such,'—ignoring the fact, that in all ages, from the time when 'the Jews agreed that if any man did confess that Jesus was the Christ, he should be put out of the synagogue,' down even to the present hour, the dominant party in the 'Church' has always anathematised and excommunicated those who differed from it, and so the 'Church' was at one time 'Arian,' at another 'Athanasian.' And for this 'Church,' which he cannot define, *p.*150,—

> Look at the Church from the first, if you will; define her, you really cannot,—

for this, so nebulous a phantom of a 'Catholic Church,' this learned writer arrogates, as others within these walls have done, authority co-ordinate with the Bible, 'Supernatural Strength,' *p.*149, 'lofty Spiritual Claims,' *p.*151, which he denies altogether to 'the Sects,' *p.*149:—

> When it is said at times that the Sects call themselves 'Churches,' and often share with us the 'One Baptism,' we may generally reply,—their *laity* may be ours; but, as for their clergy, *no one fears their*

> *claim.* When off their guard, they do not seem sure of it themselves. . . . . If they meet us in rivalry, like the magicians before Pharaoh, how wonderful soever their doings, we know that they must yield at last; our rod must swallow up their rods.

The Bible we know: but what or where is *this* 'Catholic Church,' which 'still abides,' as this author says, 'and faces the world'? The Church of Rome, comprising a very large part of Christendom, which he would probably include in it, excommunicates all other Churches: the Greek Church has no communion with the Church of Rome or with the Church of England: the English Nonconformists, the Church of Scotland, the Dutch Reformed, and all the host of Protestant non-Episcopal communities, throughout the world, by his own account are not comprised in it, for they have no 'Hierarchy.'

Let *us* rather fall back on the true Catholic Church, the Church of the Living God—'the general assembly and Church of the firstborn, which are written in Heaven,'—the faithful and true in heart, the pure and loving, of all ages, more especially those who have been 'called out,' as we Christians have been, from the rest of the human race, to know the Will and Truth of God more perfectly than others. And I say, as I have said before, that the combined witness of the human heart, in its highest estate, in its best and holiest moments, is—

> a surer evidence of the Divine original of the Bible, of its Divine appointment to fill a wonderful part in the education of mankind, than any decree of Synod or Council, or any miraculous proof could be.

> 'Whatsoever things were written aforetime, were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope.'

We are often wishing to be wiser than God. We are not content with 'hope;' we wish for 'certainty.' We want to have either an infallible Bible or an infallible Church,—something to which we may have recourse in our perplexities,—some infallible external guide, some Voice from without, such as men often long to substitute for the Voice within. But God knows best how to train us for Himself; and He has willed that in this world we should 'walk by faith

and not by sight,'—that we shall be strengthened and comforted with 'hope,' in the midst of life's trials and duties. He will not supply us with an infallible external authority, which shall supersede the necessity of our listening to that Living Word which speaks within us, and witnesses with our spirits that we are born of God. He has willed that in this way,—by being trained to exercise this awful, yet glorious, responsibility,—we shall grow before Him as His own dear children. That Voice within speaks to us of a 'hidden hope,' laid up for us in heaven with One, who has been revealing Himself to us all along, as our Friend and Father, our Faithful Creator, in the experience of our own lives, as well as in that of our fellow-men. And therefore, says the Apostle in the text, our 'hope' will grow by 'patience,'—that is, as the word properly means, by 'endurance'—as he says elsewhere, 'tribulation' or trial 'worketh endurance, and endurance experience, and experience hope, and that hope maketh not ashamed,'—we know that it will not disappoint us,—'because,' as we grow in Christian growth, 'the Love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit which is given unto us.' The faithful discharge of life's daily duties will bring to us, in the midst of all our trials, increase of our living hope, more and more of the peaceful joy of God's children, 'which passes all understanding.'

But so, too, is our hope strengthened by the 'comfort of the Scriptures.' It is not absolutely necessary, in order to have a living hope, that we should have this source of consolation, which we find in the Written Word; for we may gather it, as we have just heard, by 'patience,' by 'patient continuance in well-doing' according to the Will of God—according to that which we know of His Will, in our different circumstances. There were multitudes who lived the life of God on earth before there was a Bible: there are multitudes now, who, I doubt not, walk with God, even in heathen lands, though they have no Bible. The Galla of N.E. Africa, who could write this prayer,—

> Good God of this earth, my Lord! Thou art above me, I am below Thee! Calling upon Thee I pass the day, calling upon Thee I pass the night! If I do not pray to Thee from my heart, Thou hearest me not! If I pray to Thee with my heart, Thou knowest it,

> and art gracious unto me. O Lord, who hast no Lord, there is no strength but in Thee! Under thy hand I pass the day; under Thy hand I pass the night! Thou art my Mother, Thou my Father!

Or the Indian who said,

> He is my God, who maketh all things perfect: I believe that God made man, and that He maketh everything: He is my Friend. O God, Thou art, as it were, exceeding riches; Thy regulations are without compare; Thy servant prayeth for true patience, and that he may be devoted unto Thee,—

Surely such as these have found in their own hearts that 'patience worketh experience, and experience hope,'—nay, and their hope, too, shall not disappoint them, shall not 'make them ashamed,' in the day when the judgment of God shall be manifested.

But we, who have the Scriptures, have a special source of 'comfort' in them, besides that which we derive from our own experience: as we are called to higher work than others, so the Grace of God has provided for us more abundantly. When we read the sacred records, these writings of the men of other days,—when we see how they have lived and died, have wrought and prayed, have stood up manfully and struggled with the power of evil within and without, have risen and fallen, and risen again, have 'fought the good fight, and finished their course, and entered into their rest,' we may well have 'hope,' with such experience of other men, in the ages long ago, confirming our own, assuring us that we are 'all of one,' that the Living Word, the Eternal Son of God, was dwelling in them as He dwells now in us, 'Christ in us the Hope of Glory.'

Only 'now may the God and Giver of all patience and consolation grant us to be likeminded towards one another according to Christ Jesus.' If we cannot altogether be 'likeminded' in our views of religious truth,—if the body of Eternal Truth is so vast, so high that we cannot attain to it, so broad that we cannot grasp it, so deep that we cannot fathom it,—if, from the various circumstances in which we have been trained, from our differences of education, associations, opportunities, we see differently from one another on some points, having perhaps been led by

the course of God's Providence to fix our eyes more steadily and closely on some portions of the Truth than others,—yet God grant us to be 'likeminded *towards one another*,'—to bear with one another's honest doubts and differences,—to regard one another with brotherly kindness and charity, as fellow-servants of one household, as children of one great family.

This will be, says the Apostle, 'according to Christ Jesus.' Would that Gracious Lord, think you, if he were now on earth,—he who answered John, when he said, 'Master, we saw one casting out devils in thy name, and we forbad him, because he followeth not with us,' and Jesus said to him, 'Forbid him not, for he that is not against us is for us,'—he that turned to John and James, when they said, of those who would not receive him, 'Lord, wilt thou that we command fire to come down from Heaven, and consume them, even as Elias did?' and rebuked them with the stern reproof, 'Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of,'—he, who has said to us 'Take my yoke upon you and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart,'—who said 'Blessed are the poor in spirit!' —'Blessed are the merciful!'—'Blessed are the peacemakers!'—would he, I say, have uttered his blessing upon the harsh and angry judgments, which we are so prone to pass on one another, on account of differences in religious belief? Are the bitter words, and violent denunciations, the anathemas, the excommunications, which men are so ready to pour out upon what, from their own very limited range of vision, they regard as unsound and 'heretical'— are these things 'according to Christ Jesus'?

No! rather let us seek 'with one mind and one mouth to glorify God, the Father of Our Lord Jesus Christ,' by bringing each his share of the Master's goods, and trading with it for the gain of all. Depend upon it, no strong conviction has ever laid hold mightily on the hearts of men, —of prayerful, sincere, earnest, devout men,—without having some truth at the basis of it. National Churchman and Nonconformist, High-Church and Low-Church, Protestant and Romanist, each, doubtless, holds more firmly than others some special principle, some portion of the Eternal Truth, by the communication of which his brother might be benefited. 'Let us receive one another, then,

as Christ also received us'—as he received all into one bond of holy fellowship, both Jew and Greek, circumcision and uncircumcision—sticklers for the Law, like James, or those who believed, with Paul, that 'Love is the fulfilling of the Law'—let us receive one another 'to the Glory of God.' And 'the God of Hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope through the power of the Holy Ghost.'

VI.

THE SECOND COMING OF CHRIST.

PREACHED ON SUNDAY MORNING, DEC. 17, 1865, IN THE CATHEDRAL, MARITZBURG.

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1 Cor. iv. 5.

'THEREFORE JUDGE NOTHING BEFORE THE TIME, UNTIL THE LORD COME, WHO BOTH WILL BRING TO LIGHT THE HIDDEN THINGS OF DARKNESS, AND WILL MAKE MANIFEST THE COUNSELS OF THE HEARTS; AND THEN SHALL EVERY MAN HAVE PRAISE OF GOD.'

This season of Advent suggests for our consideration to-day the subject of the Second Coming of Christ, to which reference is made in the text as being near at hand — 'Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come.' It does not indeed appear clearly from this particular passage that St Paul looked for a *speedy* Coming of Christ; yet the words of the text really do imply it. For he speaks to his converts as if they themselves would still be living when their Lord should come: they were to 'judge nothing before the time,' but wait for that day when the judgment of God should be manifested. But in other parts of this same epistle he shows his meaning more distinctly. Thus he says, 1Cor.i.4-8,—

> 'I thank my God always on your behalf, for the grace of God which is given you by Jesus Christ, that in everything ye are enriched by Him, in all utterance and in all knowledge, even as the testimony of Christ was confirmed in you; so that ye come behind in no gift, *waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, who shall also confirm you unto the end, that ye may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.*'

And again, 1Cor.vii.29-31,—

'This I say, brethren, *the time is short;* it remaineth that both they that have wives be as though they had none, and they that weep as though they wept not, and they that rejoice as though they rejoiced not, and they that buy as though they possessed not, and they that use this world as not abusing it, for the fashion of this world passeth away.'

And again, 1Cor.x.11,—

'Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples, and they are written for our admonition, *upon whom the ends of the world are come.*'

And again, 1Cor.xv.51,—

'*We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed,* in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump.'

And how very soon, according to his expectation, that 'trump' would sound, appears from a passage in another of his epistles, 1Th.iv.13-18 :—

'I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. For, if we believe that Jesus Christ died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God *bring with him.* For this we say unto you by the Word of the Lord, that *we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord,* shall not prevent—[that is, shall not get before]—them which are asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first; then *we, which are alive and remain,* shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air; and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words.'

It is true the Apostle goes on to tell them that the exact moment of that coming was uncertain.

'But of the times and the seasons, brethren, ye have no need that I write unto you. For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night. But ye, brethren, are not in darkness that that day should overtake you—[or, rather, should surprise you]—as a thief. Ye are all the children of

> light, and the children of the day; we are not of the night, nor of darkness. Therefore let us not sleep, as do others, but let us watch and be sober . . . For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us, that *whether we wake or sleep* — [whether we are still alive on earth, or sleeping in the grave at his coming]—we should live together with him,' 1Th.v.1-10.

Yet still the whole tenor of his language in this epistle —and even in the passage just quoted—shows plainly that he expected a speedy appearance of Christ. And so he ends it with a prayer for his disciples that 'their whole spirit and soul and body might be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ,' 1 Th. v. 23; and he adds, *v.*24, 'Faithful is He who hath called you, who also will do it,'—using just the same words as those to the Corinthians, which we have heard already, when he speaks of them as '*waiting* for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ,' 1 Cor. i. 7, and then adds, *v.*8, that God would assuredly 'confirm them unto the end, that they might be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.'

These words of the Apostle seem to have produced a great effect on the minds of the Thessalonian Christians. They were disturbed with the idea that the day of Christ would almost instantly appear; and this probably led to some disorder in their daily practice, and neglect of the ordinary duties of life. The report, he says, had reached him, that 'there were some among them, who walked disorderly, working not at all, but were busybodies.' He felt it necessary, therefore, to write a second epistle, in which he beseeches them 'not to be soon shaken in mind or be troubled, neither by spirit [spiritual revelation], or word, or letter as from himself,' with the notion 'that the day of Christ was at hand,' 2Th.ii.2,—that is, was *very* near, was *close* at hand. For he tells them there must first be certain signs—a falling away from the faith, and the revelation of the *man of sins*, by which he means, apparently, a spirit of utter ungodliness and irreligion, which should betray itself in all manner of 'unrighteousness,' *v.*10,12; and then should the end come, and the Lord should 'consume that Wicked One with the spirit of his

mouth, and destroy him with the brightness of his coming,' *v.*8. Yet still even in this second epistle to the Thessalonians he evidently regards the coming as not far distant,—as near at hand, if not quite so near as they expected,—as likely to happen in the lifetime of even those then living. He beseeches them 'by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by *our gathering together unto Him*,' 2Th.ii.1; and he says,—

> 'It is a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to them that trouble you, and to you who are troubled *rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed* from heaven with his mighty angels,' 2Th.i.6,7.

It is plain, however, that, when the apostle wrote those words in that earlier epistle, he fully expected that some of those then living would be still alive upon earth at the coming of Christ—'we which are alive,' he says, 'and remain unto the coming of the Lord,'—and again, 'we which are alive and remain.' Nay, so confident was he of this, that he makes this announcement to them as on the authority of Christ himself—'This we say unto you by the Word of the Lord.' Did he refer to our Lord's words, as they stand now recorded in the Gospels, in the 24th chapter of Matthew, the 13th of Mark, the 21st of Luke, when the disciples came to him and said, 'Tell us when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?' and to that solemn announcement, which he made in the course of his reply to their inquiry, 'Verily I say unto you, *This generation shall not pass till all these things be fulfilled*'? Did the error of St Paul and the other Apostles arise from some mistaken view as to the meaning of those words?—more especially as they are given by St Luke, the intimate friend and companion in travel of St Paul,—who represents our Lord as saying,—

> 'And there shall be signs in the sun and in the moon and in the stars, and upon earth distress of nations with perplexity, and the sea and the waves roaring, men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth: for the powers of heaven shall be shaken. And then shall they see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. And when these

things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh.' And he spake to them a parable, 'Behold the fig tree and all the trees! When they now shoot forth, ye see and know of your own selves that summer is now nigh at hand. So likewise ye, when ye see these things come to pass, know ye that the Kingdom of God is nigh at hand. Verily, I say unto you, *This generation shall not pass away till all be fulfilled.* Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away. And take heed to yourselves lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness and cares of this life, so that *that day come upon you unawares. For as a snare shall it come on all them that dwell on the face of the whole earth. Watch ye, therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man.*'

Or may it be that the Apostle here refers to some other words of Jesus, which had been handed down traditionally, such as that expression which he quotes elsewhere,—'Remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive,' Actsxx.35? It is impossible to say; but certain it is that this expectation of the immediate return of their Lord prevailed for a long time among his disciples. 'The Lord is at hand!' 'Now is our salvation nearer than when we believed: the night is far spent, the day is at hand!' Such expressions as these are plain indications of that feeling: and not the less so is the fact that in those days,—'the last days,' as they are called,—there were some who mocked this hope of the early Christians; there were 'scoffers, walking after their own lusts,' who said,—

> 'Where is the promise of his coming? for, since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the Creation,' 2Pet.iii.3,4.

And still they continue thus. The order of the Universe, the gradual progress and development of the human race, continues undisturbed. We, in our day, see more plainly than ever, that these expectations of the early Church, these hopes of the apostles and first disciples of Jesus, these statements of the Scriptures, have

in their letter been contradicted by the course of events in human history. 'This fact,' as one has said, 'stares us in the face: we feel no satisfaction or security in attempting to conceal it; we cannot do so if we would.'* As the same author has written elsewhere: †—

> It was the feeling of men, who looked for the coming of Christ as we might look for the return of a lost friend, — many of whom had seen him on earth, and could not believe that he was taken from them for ever. Those who remembered the Lord would often say to one another, 'Yet a little while, and we do not see him; and again a little while, and we shall see him.' And sometimes, as years rolled on, they would ask the question they once asked in his lifetime, 'What was this that he said? We cannot tell what this was which he said?' Let us imagine them, 'with their lamps lighted and their loins girded,' in the spirit of our Lord's discourses, waiting for his appearing. The night is far spent; the day is at hand; already they see the streaks of the morning light. And then again the light fails and fades; it was the light as of a distant city: the hour is not yet come; their own wishes had made them fancy it nearer than it was. Time passes; one by one the fathers fall asleep; at last, 'a lingering star with lessening ray,' the beloved Apostle, alone remains; the saying goes forth 'that that disciple should not die'; and the daylight indeed appears, but it is the light—not of another world, but—of this.

What, then? Was this hope of theirs altogether vain—this trust unfounded? We may here again fall back on the principle, to which I have already referred in these discourses, that whenever any strong conviction has taken hold upon the hearts of earnest, sincere, truth-loving, men, there will surely be found some grand substantial Truth which lies at the basis of it. And so it is here. In one material point, we know, St Paul and the other Apostles were mistaken in their teachings about the Second Advent of Christ—as to the *time* of his coming. They may equally have been mistaken as to the *mode* and *form* of his appear-

* Prof. Jowett, *St Paul's Epistles*, I.119. † *Ibid.* p.111.

ing. Misunderstanding, perhaps, the figurative language in which he delivered his parables, they may have pictured to themselves the attendant circumstances of that event, and been as much misled in *this* respect by their glowing imaginations, as they evidently were in respect of the time of it. And, indeed, it is certain that to some extent, at all events, this must be allowed to be the case with these descriptions of the coming of Christ. It is plain that either out of their own imaginings they have filled up the outlines of the scene which they describe, or else they have used mere figurative expressions, such as our Lord himself has repeatedly used in his parables, to set before us in sensible forms the unseen realities of the spiritual world.

When, for instance, St Paul speaks of 'the last *trump*—for the *trumpet* shall sound'—'the *trump* of God,'—he either has meant to say that an actual 'trumpet' should sound on that day,—such, indeed, as we see painted in ancient pictures, projecting out of the sky, and sounded by angelic lips,—a notion this, I imagine, which no educated English Christian now entertains,—or else he has used the expression *figuratively*, to denote some Divine call, that shall be recognised in the eternal world, as a summons to the spirit, as the voice of God. But the same also must apply to other like expressions—as where he says that

> 'The Lord himself shall *descend from Heaven* with a shout'—literally with a shout of war—'with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God; and the dead in Christ shall rise first; then we, which are alive and remain, shall be *caught up together with them in the clouds*, and so shall we ever be with the Lord.'

Such language as this might be used at a time, when the earth was believed to be a flat surface, and Heaven was localised in the clouds above our heads; though it has no meaning, if explained literally, with reference to an Earth-ball like this on which we live, where there is really no 'Heaven' that exists as a place above the heads of *any* of us, much less above the heads of us *all*,—where 'above' at midday with any of us will be 'below' at midnight,—where 'upward' for millions of our fellow-men would be

exactly 'downwards' for millions of others. We may regard such words, however, as having a figurative meaning, and as having thus a substantial basis in the eternal realities of the Invisible World.

The truth is, my brethren, that we have all of us an indwelling consciousness that the course of events is not the result of a piece of mere mechanism, that has been wound up once for all, and keeps grinding on for ever. At least, if we do not *all* feel this, yet the feeling is so widely spread that in this case, as in many others, we may say *Vox Populi, Vox Dei*—'the Voice of the People is the Voice of God,—or in the words of another famous proverb, which a great English writer (Dr J. H. Newman) has lately quoted, *Securus judicat Orbis Terrarum*, 'the World judges securely,' that is, 'the judgment of the great mass of humankind may be safely trusted.' We feel that there is an Intelligence presiding over human affairs,—that there is a Heart, a Parent's Heart, answering to the cry of human hearts. And by reason of this feeling it is that, besides the prayers for help, for pity, for forgiveness, which have risen up continually on every side to the Supreme Arbiter, there has been an often—an ever—repeated expectation, that some time or other He will surely appear to set all things right. In the heart of poor troubled, oppressed, humanity, it has always been sounding,—'He cometh—He cometh—to judge righteously the earth!'

Among the Jews, under their peculiar circumstances,—believing themselves to have been, as in fact they were, an elect people, a people chosen out in God's Providence to be the special recipients of spiritual Revelations for the good of the whole Family of Man,—yet feeling themselves bowed down under the yoke of foreign tyrants, which they compared with that of their Egyptian taskmasters,—this sense of the need of an Avenger and Deliverer had long been shaping itself into the expectation of the coming of Messiah. And all the grand prophecies of the *later* Isaiah, as he is called,—the unknown Prophet of the Captivity, to whom the last twenty-seven chapters of the present Book of Isaiah belong,—which spoke originally of 'Jacob' or 'Israel' itself, the true Israel, the faithful and true in heart, as God's 'Servant'—

'But thou, Israel, my Servant, Jacob, whom I have

chosen, the seed of Abraham my friend, thou whom I have taken from the ends of the earth, and called thee from the chief men thereof, and said unto thee, Thou art my Servant, I have chosen thee and not cast thee away,' Is.xli.8,9,—

all those magnificent passages which describe this 'Servant of God,' as chosen to be the messenger of God's Love to others, to be 'for a covenant of the people, for a light of the Gentiles,' Is.xlii.6,—

'Behold my Servant, whom I uphold, mine Elect, in whom My soul delighteth! I have put My Spirit upon him, he shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles,' Is.xlii.1.

Which assure him also of a glorious triumph in the end,—'he shall not fail nor be discouraged, till he have set judgment in the earth, and the isles shall wait for his law,' Is.xlii.4,—

had come by degrees to be explained exclusively of the Messiah, whom they expected to appear as the glorious King, the mighty Conqueror, whose great work would be to 'restore again the kingdom to Israel.'*

* 'One other voice begins to make itself heard as Ezekiel's words die away—a 'voice' rather than a living man—the last swan-like song of the Prophets of the monarchy—a voice sounding in the barren wilderness between the Captivity and the Return, between Babylon and Jerusalem. It is that wonderful strain, which, by likeness of thought and language, seems a continuation of the great Isaiah, by its connexion with the sufferings and fall of the nation, links itself to the fortunes of Jeremiah or of Baruch, and by its mysterious origin and independent character well claims the title of the 'great Unnamed.'

'Those six [seven] and twenty chapters of the Book of Isaiah—the most deeply inspired, the most truly Evangelical, of any portion of the Prophetical writings, whatever be their date, and whoever their author—take their stand on the times of the Captivity, and from thence look forward from the summit of the last ridge of Jewish history into the remotest future, unbroken now by any intervening barrier.

Both worlds at once they view,
Who stand upon the threshold of the new.'

Stanley's *Lectures on the Jewish Church*. Second Series, p.576.

'In the past, not the regal magnificence of David and Solomon, but the patriarchal simplicity of Abraham, and the grand prophetic march of Moses, furnish the grounds of hope. In the foreground of the future stands, not the Ruler, or Conqueror, but the '*Servant*' of God, gentle, purified, suffering—whether it be Cyrus, whom he had anointed; or Jacob, whom he had chosen, His people with whom after all their affliction he was well pleased; or Jeremiah and the prophetic order, the victim of their country's sins, led as a lamb to the slaughter; or One, more sorrowful, more triumphant, more human, more divine, than any of these, the last and true fulfilment of the most spiritual hopes and the highest aspirations of the Chosen People.' *Ibid.* p.580.

After the death of Jesus, the same expectation appeared again in the Christian Church, in the form which we have been considering. They looked for his speedy return in the clouds of Heaven, as we find it expressed in so many passages of the Epistles, in figures like those which occur in the Book of Daniel and in the apocryphal Book of Enoch, which last was in existence, and much studied in the Apostolic age. And we have seen that the Apostles fully believed that in their own lifetime this second advent of their Lord would take place,—that in a glorious or radiant form he would be manifested to the fleshly eyes of all, sitting upon the clouds, and surrounded by hosts of angelic beings,—

> 'when the Lord Jesus should be revealed from Heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, who should be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power, when he should come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe, in that day,' 2Th.i.7-10.

We know, indeed, by the past course of events, that in this expectation they were certainly mistaken. But what was their mistake? It only related to the *time* and the *manner*—to the outward forms—of things. The loving faithful soul was not deceived or betrayed. Their Lord and Master had come to them again—not in the way in which their fond hearts looked for Him,—not to 'restore again the Kingdom to Israel,' with earthly pomp and observation,—not visible to mortal eyes, 'on clouds of glory seated,' encompassed by myriads of the angelic host,—not thus had he come—but by the quiet spread of his Divine teaching, by the setting up of his Kingdom of 'righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost'—not by the storm-wind, the earthquake, and the fire, but by the 'still small voice' of the truth spoken in love. The clouds of glory, on which the Son of Man came, were the pure and loving lives of the early Christians; the angels, which heralded the entrance of his Kingdom, were those bright spirits, which surround the Throne of God, 'love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness,

temperance.' He did come to 'restore the Kingdom to Israel,' in a higher sense than they had ever dreamt of. To the 'Israel of God,' to the faithful and true in heart in every land, the lessons taught by his Life and by his Death brought strength and support in all their tribulations; they felt the world to be beneath their feet; they feared not its frowns and terrors; 'sitting in heavenly places,' they heeded not its pomp and pride; they reigned in light already, as the children of God.

The expectations, however, of some visible, sensible, appearance of the Son of Man has still remained within the Church even till now; and in the various Creeds, which express the thoughts and beliefs of devout men in the ages long gone by, and which are still repeated in our worship, to use the words of Bishop Watson, 'as useful summaries of what their compilers believed to be true,' the ancient Bishops of the Church, who framed them, have thus expressed this expectation:—

> He ascended into Heaven, and sitteth on the right hand of God the Father Almighty, from whence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead.

If we turn to the most orthodox commentators upon these words of the Creed, we shall find that they interpret the *first* clause literally. Thus, for instance, Bishop Pearson says:—

> When we say the place into which He ascended was Heaven, and from the expositions of the Apostles must understand thereby the Heaven of Heavens, or the Highest Heaven, it followeth that we believe the body with the soul of Christ to have *passed far above all those celestial bodies which we see*, and to look upon that opinion as a low conceit, that *left his body in the sun*.

Bishop Pearson, then, believed the 'Highest Heaven,' where God's Presence dwells, to be a *place* 'far above' all the stars that we see,—a supposition which, viewed in the light of our modern astronomical knowledge, is obviously unmeaning and childish. As observed already, what is 'far above' us at this moment, will, at the end of twelve hours, be 'far below' us: what is 'far above' to persons

in one hemisphere will at the same instant of time be 'far below' to persons in the other.

But when the same commentators explain the *second* clause of this passage, 'he sitteth on the right hand of God,' they have recourse at once to metaphors. God cannot have a 'right hand,' and therefore Christ cannot be meant actually to 'sit down' at the right hand of God. Thus Bishop Pearson says again:

> God, being a Spirit, can have no material or corporeal parts, and, consequently, as He hath no body, so, in a proper sense, can He have no hands at all. But, because God is pleased to descend to our capacity, and not only to speak by the mouths of men, but also after the manner of men, He expresseth that which is in Him by some analogy with that which belongs to us.

Rather it is we, human beings, who in our weakness speak of the things of God, which pass our comprehension, in language taken from our human relations, which must not therefore be pressed too closely; and hence the Scripture writers speak of the 'eye' and 'ear' and 'face,' of the 'right hand' and of the 'holy arm' of God—using figurative expressions to denote the underlying eternal realities. Accordingly, Augustine says,—

> We must understand the expression, *at the right hand of God,* to be said of *Supreme Blessedness,* where is righteousness, and peace, and joy;—

and again he says,—

> What is the *right hand* of the Father, but that eternal and ineffable Felicity, to which the Son of Man attained?—

and again,—The name of that Blessedness itself is the *right hand* of the Father.

So, again, Bishop Pearson writes, with reference to another expression in this second clause:—

> As for the other part of the phrase, that is, his session (or sitting), we must not look upon it as determining any *posture of his body* in the heavens, correspondent to the inclination and curvation of our limbs. For we read in the Scriptures a more general term, which signifies only his being in heaven, without any ex-

pression of the particular manner of his presence: so St Paul, 'who is even at the right hand of God,' and St Peter, 'who is gone into heaven, and is at the right hand of God.'

But, if we are taught to understand metaphorically one clause of the Creed, why shall we not be allowed, where the necessities of our modern knowledge of facts require it, to use the same liberty with others? Let those, who can, believe in Heaven as *a place above men's heads*, in some part of the earth—perhaps, in Palestine,—and below the feet of men living elsewhere,—nay, below their own feet in the course of a few hours. Our wisdom will be to 'translate the language of the devout men of older ages into that of our own.' For us, *where God is*—where God's presence is felt and realised, the presence of a gracious Father and Friend—*that is Heaven:* and the lowliest among us that 'walks in the light, as God is in the light,' is 'walking with God,' has 'fellowship with God,' is dwelling even now in Heaven. This, indeed, is what St Paul himself teaches, when he says to the Ephesians,—

'God hath raised us together with (him), and made us *sit together with* (him) *in the heavenly places* in Christ Jesus,' ii.6—

the very same expression which he uses in i.20,—

'having raised him from the dead, and made him *sit on His own right hand in the heavenly places.*'

'Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts; and then shall every man have praise—[rather, *his* praise—his due proportion of praise]—of God.'

St Paul, as we have seen, expected speedily a visible manifestation of the Son of Man, to which he here refers: and in this he was mistaken. But the real lesson of the text remains the same. The Living Word—'the Life,' which is 'the Light of men,' 'the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world,'—our Light and Life—the Lord of our spirits—the Eternal Son of God—is ever present with us, witnessing with His pure eyes the 'hidden things of darkness,' which we commit,

discerning the secret 'counsels,' the 'thoughts and intents,' of our hearts: and by that Living Word—by that Divine Lord—shall we be judged in the last Great Day. He knows what light has been given to us—what knowledge of God's Will—what grace to resist temptation—what power to do good—what strength and encouragement to war with evil; He knows what Divine gifts have been committed to our charge—what means of usefulness—what opportunities of blessing others, and of growing in the Christian Life ourselves; and what use or abuse we may have made of them. 'All things are naked and open in the sight of Him with whom we have to do.' And all will be known in that day,—the secret things laid bare,—the veils torn off, which have here hid from men's eyes our sins and our hypocrisies; the hidden things of darkness will be brought to light, the counsels of the hearts—of true hearts and false—of clean hearts and foul—be manifested: 'and then shall every man have his praise—[his own just share of praise or blame]—of God.'

But not then only first, when time shall be no longer, will such a judgment as this take place. It is going on now. Thank God! we are not left unvisited, unrewarded, unchastened, even in this life. Even now there are those, who are

> 'sitting in darkness and in the shadow of death, fast bound in misery and iron, because they rebelled against the words of the Lord, and lightly regarded the counsel of the Most Highest.'

Even now, as the Apostle says,—

> 'Some men's sins are open beforehand, going before to judgment, and some men they follow after. Likewise also the good works of some are manifest beforehand; and they that are otherwise cannot be hid.' 1Tim.v.24-25.

And though we are taught not to 'judge before the time,' and are moreover warned by the lips of our Lord himself not hastily to speak of the great calamities of others, as signs of God's displeasure, or of their great successes as special signs of His favour,—though in this life the praise or blame of God is not to be looked for in outward manifestations, but in the peace of an approving conscience, or in the restlessness and gloom of a guilty one,—yet, doubt-

less, if our eyes were cleared and our knowledge extended to take in the great drama of human history, from its dim beginnings to its present complicated aspect, we should not only be able to see signs of human progress, to see that virtue, knowledge, power, were gradually increasing, —but from time to time we should see the Son of God *appear* among men—by some bright manifestations of His Presence—by some determined check to the progress of evil—by some great deliverance wrought for the good and true of heart—by some fresh breaking forth of the light of Divine Truth. And by faith we apprehend what we cannot now see. That sense of righteousness, which we all have, as a part of our very nature, compels us to ascribe to the Great Being who made us, a perfect Righteousness, of which our own is but the faint reflection, and which will one day be fully manifested. As a living writer has powerfully said :—

> Religion is the belief in a Spirit, whose mercies are over all His works,—Who is kind even to the unthankful and the evil,—Who is everywhere present, and therefore is in no place to be sought, and in no place to be evaded,—to Whom all creatures, times, and things, are everlastingly holy,—and Who claims, not tithes of wealth nor sevenths of days, but all the wealth that we have, and all the days that we live, and all the beings that we are,—but Who claims that totality, because He delights only in the delight of His creatures, and because, therefore, the one duty that they owe to Him, and the only service they can render Him, is to be happy, — a Spirit, therefore, whose Eternal Benevolence cannot be angered, cannot be appeased,—Whose laws are everlasting and inexorable, so that Heaven and Earth must indeed pass away, if one jot of them failed,—Laws, which attach to every wrong and error a measured, inevitable penalty, to every rightness and prudence an assured reward,—penalty, of which the remittance cannot be purchased, and reward, of which the promise cannot be broken.*

* Ruskin, *Royal Inst. of British Architects, Sess. Pap.* 1864-5,p.143.

VII.

THE JOY OF CHRISTMAS.

PREACHED ON SUNDAY MORNING, DEC. 24, 1865, IN THE CATHEDRAL, MARITZBURG.

PHIL. V. 4.

'REJOICE IN THE LORD ALWAY, AND AGAIN I SAY, REJOICE.'

To-MORROW will be celebrated in the Church the Festival of Christmas, — the day which we keep year by year in commemoration of the birth of our Lord. I need hardly remind you that in this country, in this southern hemisphere, the outward circumstances under which Christmas is kept, are very different from those under which it is kept in the mother-land,—under which we ourselves have kept it in the days gone by,—under which our dear ones in England are keeping it now. The season of the year is entirely different. Instead of the Christmas morning, bright and clear, which we associate with our memories of the past, when—

> The silent snow possessed the earth,—

and we trod the way to God's House with spirits braced and footsteps quickened with the cold of midwinter, we are here in the height of summer; and our Christmas Day may be, indeed, a day like this, cloudy and cool, or it may be one of parching heat, or of drenching rain, and it may close amidst the roar of the tempest and the flashes of the thunderstorm. We cannot here 'weave,' as at home, in the dear old land—

> The holly round the Christmas hearth;

not here, for us—

The Yule-log sparkles keen with frost;

though we may bring our palms, and choice semi-tropical flowers, to decorate the Church, or the house and the festal table. We cannot here enter into that feeling, which deepens the joy of the Christmas season in a northern clime,—the sense, I mean, that the first half of the winter gloom is over,—the shortest day has come and gone,—the sun is now travelling upwards again from the farthest South, bringing light and life for the frozen regions of the North, and each day now, as the year goes on, will be longer than its predecessor,—the New Year is born, and new hopes are springing with it. We, too, shall soon, if God spare us, begin a New Year—and may it be with new hopes: but it is not born out of the depth of winter; our days will lessen—our light and heat decrease; our Sun is at its highest now, and will soon be leaving us, carrying the Spring before him, and the Summer with him, as he goes. The whole character and feeling of the season is altered.

You are hardly, perhaps, aware how closely the joy of Christmas-time is properly linked with the season of mid-winter, and cannot, therefore, be fully realised in a climate like ours. I need hardly say that the 25th of December has no connection that we know of with the actual birth-day of Christ. Nothing whatever is known as to the day of his birth, and even the year of it is greatly disputed. As a clerical writer of some note* has said,—

> There is also strong presumption *against* our Lord's Nativity having been in December. The decree for a registration certainly was not executed in the middle of winter. Nor should we read of shepherds being abroad in the fields at this season, and in a part of the country where the winter is particularly severe.

He reckons accordingly, from the account in St Luke, that the birth of Christ would fall in the latter part of September. Some of the ancients appear to have fixed the birthday of Christ in April, others in May. The Eastern Church generally, for several ages, kept it on the same day as the Feast of the Epiphany: the Western Church kept it, as now, on the 25th of December, which

* The Rev. R. Eden, *Churchman's Theological Dictionary*, p.44.

they called his 'First Nativity,' and twelve days afterwards they kept his 'Second Nativity,' that is, the Epiphany. But it was not till the Fourth Century that this practice universally prevailed.

And what was the special reason for fixing this Christian Festival in this particular part of the year? I quote from the learned work of Bingham on *Christian Antiquities*, ii.*p.*1145:

> Some think the very design of appointing the Feast of Christ's Nativity and Epiphany at this season of the year was chiefly to oppose the vanities and excesses which the heathen indulged themselves in, upon their Saturnalia and calends of January at this very time of the year. Nazianzen's exhortation to his people on the Nativity of Christ seems directly intended against them, when he thus endeavours to guard his auditors from running into the same abuses. 'Let us celebrate this festival, not in the way of the world, but in a divine and celestial manner,—not minding our own things, but the things of the Lord,—not the things that tend to make us sick and infirm, but those things which will heal and cure us. Let us not crown our doors with garlands, nor exercise ourselves with dances. Let us not adorn our streets, nor feed our eyes, nor gratify our ears with music, nor any of our senses, touching, tasting, smelling, with any of those things that lead the way to vice, and are the inlets of sin. Let us not effeminately adorn ourselves with soft clothing, nor jewels, nor gold, nor artificial colours, invented to destroy the Divine image in us. Let us not indulge in rioting and drunkenness, which are frequently attended with chambering and wantonness. Let us not set up our lofty canopies or tables, providing delicacies for the belly, nor be enamoured with the fragrancy of wines, or niceties of cookery, and precious ointments. Let not sea and land present us with their precious dung (for that is the best name I can give their delights), nor let any of us think to outdo one another in luxury and intemperance. But let us leave these things to the heathen, and to their heathenish pomps and festivals, who give the name of

> gods to those who delight in the smell of sacrifices, and agreeably worship their deities with the belly, being wicked makers of wicked devils, and as wicked priests and worshippers of them. But let us, who worship the Word of God, place our delights in the Divine Law, and such discourses as are proper and agreeable to the present festival.'

From the energy with which this ancient Bishop declaims against the luxurious habits of the times, it is plain that the time of the Christmas Festival was in those days not uncommonly a time of special feasting and banqueting among *Christians*, as well as heathens. And, in truth, this season of the year has always been a joyous time among various nations of the northern hemisphere,—among the rude heathens of Scandinavia, and the civilised heathens of Greece and Rome, as well as within the bounds of the Christian Church. For it was, as I have said, the changing time of the year—the time for *them* of the winter solstice,—the time when for them the sun was new-born, as it were, out of the depths of winter, when the old year was departing, and the new year beginning. This season has been one of feasting from very early periods among nations north of the line. The birthday of the Sun was kept in ancient Egypt, and the old northern feast of Yule, with its log and its wassail-bowl, had only to be sanctified to become the modern festival of Christmas. The ancient Fathers of the Church did wisely in thus substituting, for the wild excesses and idolatrous feasts of the heathen, the soberer enjoyments of Christian festivity. So Gregory the Great, A.D.601, wrote to the Abbot Mellitus, then going into Britain, the following directions, to be communicated to Augustine, the first Archbishop of Canterbury:—

> When, therefore, Almighty God shall bring you to the most reverend Bishop Augustine, our brother, tell him what I have, upon mature deliberation of the affairs of the English, determined upon, viz., that the temples of the idols ought not to be destroyed; but let the idols that are in them be destroyed; let holy water be made and sprinkled in the said temples; let altars be erected, and relics placed. For, if those

temples are well built, it is requisite that they be converted from the worship of devils to the service of the true God; that the nation, seeing that their temples are not destroyed, may remove error from their hearts, and, knowing and adoring the true God, may they more familiarly resort to the places to which they have been accustomed. And because they have been used to slaughter many oxen in the sacrifices to devils, *some solemnity must be exchanged for them on this account;* as that, on the day of the dedication, or the nativities of the holy martyrs, whose relics are there deposited, they may build themselves huts of the boughs of trees, about those churches which have been turned to that use from temples, and celebrate the solemnity with religious feastings, and no more offer beasts to the Devil, but kill cattle to the praise of God in their eating, and return thanks to the Giver of all things for their sustenance; to the end that, while some gratifications are outwardly permitted them, they may the more easily consent to the inward consolations of the Grace of God. For there is no doubt that it is impossible to efface everything at once from their obdurate minds; because he, who endeavours to ascend to the highest place, rises by degrees or steps, and not by leaps. Thus the Lord made himself known to the people of Israel in Egypt; and yet He allowed them the use of the sacrifices, which they were wont to offer to the Devil, in His own worship; so as to command them in His sacrifice to kill beasts, to the end that, changing their hearts, they might lay aside one part of the sacrifice, whilst they retained another; that, whilst they offered the same beasts which they were wont to offer, they should offer them to God and not to idols; and thus they would no longer be the same sacrifices. *Bede*, i.30.

I need hardly say that such language as this of Gregory the Great, with reference to the appointment of sacrifices in the wilderness, if found in a modern work upon the Pentateuch, would be deemed 'heretical.'

So again writes Mosheim, *Eccl. Hist., Cent.* vi., *part* i., *ch.* iv:—

To those festivals that were celebrated in the preceding [fifth] century, were now added the festival of the Purification of the Blessed Virgin,—[a festival still retained in the Church of England,]—*invented with a design to remove the uneasiness of the heathen converts, on account of the loss of their Lupercalia or Feasts of Pan, which had been formerly observed in the month of February,*—the Festival of the Immaculate Conception,—the day set apart to commemorate the birth of St John,—[which we celebrate on Wednesday next,]—and others less worthy of mention.

In England, as we all well know, the celebration of Christmas is closely associated with the idea of family reunions, feastings, and largesses to the poor. The Christmas dinner, and the Christmas bounty, are intimately connected with our ideas of the season. The very sense of our own enjoyment, by a warm fireside, and amidst all the blessings of a comfortable home, compels us, as human beings, not less than as Christians, to think of those who are suffering from want or cold, exposed without to the clemency of the season,—compels us to do our part, as best we may, towards relieving that misery. And this universal flow of benevolence is evidently linked by a natural cause to the season of the year, quite as much so as the exuberant joy, which in older times broke forth in Saturnalian revelry, and in modern days expends itself more innocently in the round game, the dance, and the pantomime. To feel this, we have only just to picture to ourselves what Christmas would be in England, *if it happened at Midsummer.* How shorn would it be of its glory, its mirth, its bounty. How hopeless would be the attempt to throw into that Christmas the feelings of the Winter Festival!

And we, my brethren, have here to keep a *Summer* Christmas—and all those adventitious circumstances, which add so much meaning to the English Feast, are absent for us. The cycle of the ecclesiastical year has been made for a *northern,* not for a southern, clime. We must fall back, then, upon the simple meaning of the day—as a day that is kept in memory of the birth of Christ; and seek our Christmas joy—not in those seasonable thoughts and feelings, which quicken the dullest heart in

England, but which here we cannot share,—but in the grateful contemplation of some of those blessings which the birth of Christ has brought with it.

And, truly, the ancient Christians did well in linking this feast with the birthday of the Sun. However many the rays of Divine Light, which like the morning twilight have shone in other faiths over all the earth, we see in the birth of him, whom the Father sanctified and sent into the world to lighten us, the rising indeed of the Sun of Righteousness. The Light, which he brought to us by his Divine Teaching, is the light of our spirit's life. For how shall man be true and pure, except in conscious communion with the Father of Spirits, whom the Christ revealed to us? How shall frail human nature blossom or come to perfection, unsupported by the belief that there is One above all, who is, as Jesus said, 'Your Father and My Father, Your God and My God?' This is the central point of our Lord's teaching, *to show us the Father*. This is the Truth, of which he spoke when he said, 'To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the Truth.' There is a fable among the rich wild treasures of German fancy, about the Christ coming back from the upper world to tell the children of men that there was *no* God—that they were orphans. However fantastic, it serves to shadow out in darkness the opposite truth—the truth which Jesus declared in his life and in his death—'Children, ye are *not* orphans: the Father is with you: the Omnipotent Creator, whose Will is the *Law* of the Universe of unconscious matter, is a Father to spirits—is a Father to you. He said, as we remember, 'The Father hath not left me alone: I am not alone, because the Father is with me.' And what was true of him—our Elder Brother—is true of us all. In all our need, in all our times of trial, we shall not be alone: for the Father will be with us: and holding His hand, guided by His providence, we need not fear to enter into the darkness,—into the darkness of this world's storm and trouble, or into the gloom of the grave,—even as he, the Son of Man, led by the same Almighty Hand, has passed through both before us. He has taught us all to say, 'Our Father.' He has told us that every son of man is a child of God—the unthankful and the evil, the

prodigal pining with want in the far-off land of sin, as well as the obedient children, who have daily sweet communion with Him, to whom He says, 'Sons and daughters, ye are ever with Me: all that I have is yours.' He who was once hushed in a mother's arms, and smiled a little helpless infant on her knee, has by his sacred teaching taught us to realise the awfully grand, ennobling, thought, that all humanity is sacred, made after the likeness, in the image, of God, has taught us to feel that every little frail one, coming into this world of trial, is God's child. Not as amongst the sages of the East now, or of the West in former times, when only the philosopher, or the ascetic, or the hero, or the highly-gifted was the Son of God, and all the rest were esteemed little better than beasts: but in the light of Christianity—of his teaching whose birthtime we are now celebrating—we learn not to despise one of these little ones,—'for in Heaven,' he said, 'their angels do always behold the face of my Father.'

'Rejoice in the Lord alway, and again I say, Rejoice.' The one special source of joy, which the birth of Christ into the world has brought us, is the revelation which he made of the Fatherhood of God. But children share the nature of their father; and we, too, as children of God, are made in our measure, as the Scripture says, 'partakers of the Divine nature'; we are made after the likeness, in the image, of God: there is that in us—in our moral and spiritual nature—which distinguishes us from the brutes that perish—which marks us out as beings of immortal hopes. In our physical nature, in our mere bodily organisation, in our external perishable system of flesh and blood, we are, indeed, as modern researches have shown, closely allied to the highest order of animals. But the human mind—with its sense of beauty, order, law, in the universe,—with its power of distinguishing right and wrong, the true and the false, the good and the evil,—with its natural love of the right, the true, and the good, its natural hatred of the wrong, the false, and the evil—with its tender affections, its divine desires, its glorious hopes and fears, its 'longings after immortality,'—in one word, the moral and spiritual part of our nature—is that which makes us truly children of God, and separates us altogether from the brute. And the Divine Gift, which we possess,

is described in Scripture, as the effect of the indwelling Word, Who is the Life and Light of men, 'the true Light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world.'

This subject is brought before us especially by our Church at this season in the Gospel for Christmas-Day. It may be well that we should consider it a little more closely.

> 'In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by Him, and without Him was not anything made that was made. In Him was Life, and the Life was the Light of men.'

The language of this passage is adopted from the Alexandrian philosophy, especially as modified, by the intermixture of Jewish ideas, in the writings of Philo,—of which I have spoken before in reference to some phenomena in the epistle to the Hebrews. Dean Alford writes as follows in his recently published Commentary:—

> We are now to inquire how it came that John found this word *Logos*—[here translated in our E.V. 'the Word']—*so ready-made to his hands, as to require no explanation.* The answer to this will be found by tracing the *gradual personification* of the *Word* or *Wisdom* of God, in the O.T. and Jewish writings.
>
> We find faint traces of this personification in the Book of Psalms:
>
> 'For the *Word* of Jehovah is right, and all his Works are with truth,' Ps.xxxiii.4;
>
> 'By the *Word* of Jehovah were the heavens made, and all the host of them by the Breath of His Mouth,' Ps.xxxiii.6;
>
> 'He sent His *Word* and healed them, and delivered them from their destructions,' Ps.cvii.20;
>
> 'For ever, Jehovah, thy *Word* is settled in heaven,' Ps.cxix.89;
>
> 'Thy *Word* is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path,' Ps.cxix.105;
>
> 'He sendeth forth His Commandment upon earth, His *Word* runneth very swiftly,' Ps.cxlvii.15;
>
> 'He sendeth out His *Word* and melteth them;

He causeth His wind to blow, and the waters flow,' Ps.cxlvii.18.

These are all the passages, quoted by this writer from the Book of Psalms, and showing 'faint traces' of this personification of the 'Word of God.' It must be confessed that the traces are here *very* 'faint' indeed,—if not quite imperceptible,—and the language seems to be merely that of religious poetry. Dean Alford says indeed:—

> It was not the mere offspring of poetic diction. For the whole form and expression of the O.T. revelation was that of the *Word of God.* The Mosaic History opens with 'God said, Let there be Light.' *Spoken* commands, either openly or in visions, were the communications from God to Man. It is the Word, in all the Prophets,—the Word, in the Law,—in short, the Word, in all God's dealing with His people.

And he refers, further, to three passages from the prophets:

> 'As the rain cometh down from heaven, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower and bread to the eater; so shall My *Word* be that goeth forth out of My Mouth; it shall not return unto me void; but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it.' Is.lv.10,11;
>
> 'The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: but the *Word* of our God shall stand for ever.' Is.xl.8;
>
> 'Is not My *Word* like a fire? saith Jehovah, and like a hammer that breaketh the rocks in pieces?' Jer.xxiv.29.

But in all this there does not appear to be as yet a trace of anything more than mere poetical personification of the Word of God. There is nothing approaching to the recognition of an actual Person, a Living Word, who 'was with God and was God.'

Dean Alford then refers to two passages of the O.T., in which the *Wisdom* of God is personified. The first is in Job xxviii.12-28, beginning thus—

But where shall *Wisdom* be found?
And where is the place of *Understanding?*

and ending,—

Behold! the fear of Jehovah that is *Wisdom;*
And to depart from evil is *Understanding.*

But here also there is no proper personification of 'Wisdom,' much less of the 'Wisdom of God.' In the other passage 'Wisdom' is indeed very strongly personified, and it is said of it,—

Doth not *Wisdom* cry,
And *Understanding* put forth her voice? . . . .
Unto you, O man, I call,
And my voice is to the sons of man. . . .
I love them that love me,
And they that seek me early shall find me. Prov.viii.1-17.

And it is added, *v.*22-30:—

Jehovah possessed me in the beginning of His Way,
Before His works of old.
I was set up from everlasting,
From the beginning, or ever the earth was. . . . .
Then I was by Him, as one brought up with Him;
And I was daily His delight, rejoicing always before Him.

Yet here also the conclusion is, as before,—

The fear of Jehovah is the beginning of *Wisdom.*
And the knowledge of the Holy is *Understanding.* ix.10.

In short, in the whole O.T., there is no sign as yet of any such a personification of the 'Word of God,' as we shall now find in two Apocryphal Books and in the writings of Philo, when the religious ideas of the Jews had been blended with the teaching of the Platonic Philosophy. The two books to which I refer are those called in our Bibles 'the Wisdom of Solomon' and 'the Wisdom of Jesus the son of Sirach, or Ecclesiasticus,'—Books, which though rejected from the Canon of our Church, are recognised as Canonical by the two great Eastern and Western Churches, the Greek and the Roman, and formed part of the Septuagint Bible, which our Lord and the Apostles studied, and from which they 'frequently quoted,' to which also St Paul referred as Scripture, when he wrote—'Whatsoever things were written aforetime were

written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of *the Scriptures* might have hope,'—

or when he wrote again,—

'*All Scripture* divinely-inspired is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness,'—

nay, which are actually quoted in the Homilies of the Church of England repeatedly as 'Holy Scripture,' while these and other parts of the Apocrypha are spoken of as 'the Word of God,' as the 'teaching of the Holy Ghost'*—from which facts we may gather the very wide and general sense in which our Church, in speaking of the Scriptures, uses those expressions 'the Word of God,' 'the Holy Ghost saith,' which we have been lately considering.

In Ecclesiasticus, then, which, says Dean Alford, 'belongs probably to the latter half of the second century before Christ'—(that is, it was translated from the original Hebrew about that time at Alexandria),—we find it written—

All *Wisdom* is from the Lord,
And is with Him for ever.
Wisdom hath been created before all things,
And the *Understanding* of prudence from everlasting.
To whom hath the root of *Wisdom* been revealed?
Or who hath known her wise counsels?
There is One wise and greatly to be feared,
The Lord sitting upon His throne.
He created her, and saw her, and numbered her,
And *poured her out upon all His works.*
She is with all flesh according to His gift,
And He hath given her to them that love Him. I. 1,4,6,8,9,10.

And again in the 24th chapter, which is occupied with the 'Praise of Wisdom,' we have yet stronger instances of personification:

* 'As the invention of them was the beginning of spiritual fornication, as the *Word of God* testifieth, Wisd.xiv.12.' *Third Part of Hom. against Peril of Idolatry, Corrie's Ed. p.*246. 'Doth IT (the Word of God) not call a gilt or painted idol, or image, 'a strumpet with a brazen face,' Bar.vi.9.'Do.*p.*247. 'The same lesson doth *the Holy Ghost* also teach in sundry places of the Scripture, saying, 'Mercifulness and almsgiving purgeth from all sins, and delivereth from death, and suffereth not the soul to come into darkness.' Tob.iv.10.' *Second Part of the Sermon of Almsdeeds*, Do.*p.*391. '*Almighty God* by the Wise man saith, 'That man, which sweareth much, shall be full of sin, and the scourge of God shall not depart from his house,' Ecclus.xxiii.11.' *First Part of the Sermon of Swearing*, Do.*p.*73.

Wisdom shall praise herself,
And shall glory in the midst of her people.
I came out of the Mouth of the Most High,
And covered the earth as a cloud.
I alone compassed the circuit of the heaven,
And walked in the bottom of the deep,
In the waves of the sea and in all the earth,
And in every people and nation I got possession.
With all these I sought rest,
And in whose inheritance shall I abide?
So the Creator of all things gave me a commandment,
And He that made me caused my tabernacle to rest, and said,
'Let thy dwelling be in Jacob,
And thine inheritance in Israel.'
He created me before the beginning of the world,
And I shall never fail.
In the holy tabernacle I served before Him,
And so was I established in Him.
And I took root in an honourable people,
Even in the portion of the Lord's inheritance.
I am the Mother of fair love, and fear,
And knowledge, and holy hope.
I therefore, being eternal,
Am given to all my children which are chosen of Him.
They that eat me shall yet be hungry,
And they that drink me shall yet be thirsty. xxiv.1-21.

There is here evidently a considerable advance in the development of the idea of the '*Wisdom* of God' identical with the '*Word* of God,'—(observe, '*I came out of the Mouth* of the Most High,')—as a personal existence, who is the '*Mother* of love, and fear, and knowledge, and hope.'

In the still later book of the 'Wisdom of Solomon,' 'dating probably,' says Dean Alford, 'about 100 B.C.' we have Wisdom described as '*sitting by God's Throne*,' ix.4; and the author writes—

O God of my fathers and Lord of mercy, who hast made all things by Thy Word, and ordained man through Thy Wisdom, that he should have dominion over the creatures which Thou hast made . . . . give me Wisdom *that sitteth by Thy Throne* . . . .
And Wisdom was with Thee, which knoweth thy works, and was present when Thou madest the world, and knew what was acceptable in Thy sight, and right in Thy commandments. O send her out of Thy holy heaven, and from the throne of Thy Glory, that being

present she may labour with me, that I may know what is pleasing unto Thee. ix.1-10.

And again he says—

Thine Almighty Word leaped down from heaven out of Thy royal throne, as a fierce man of war into the midst of a land of destruction, and brought Thine unfeigned commandment as a sharp sword, and standing up filled all things with death. xviii.15,16.

Upon which Dean Alford observes—

It seems highly probable that the author's monotheistic views were already confused by the admixture of Platonism, and that he regarded Wisdom as a kind of soul of the world. He occasionally puts her for God, occasionally for an attribute of God. But he had not yet attained that near approach to a *personal* view, which we shall find in the next step of our inquiry. The large body of Jews resident in Alexandria were celebrated for their *gnosis* or religious philosophy. The origin of this philosophy must be referred to the mixture of the Jewish religious element with the speculative philosophies of the Greeks, more especially with that of Plato, and with ideas acquired during the captivity from Oriental sources. But the most complete representation of the Judæo-Alexandrine gnosis has come down to us in the works of Philo, who flourished about A.D. 40-50.

In the Targums (or Chaldee Paraphrases) on the Pentateuch, the same expression 'Word of Jehovah' is constantly used to denote the Divine Being, when personally manifesting Himself to Man; though, as the oldest of these Targums probably 'was begun to be committed to writing about the end of the 2nd century after Christ' (*Dict. of the Bible,* iii.*p.*1644), the Scripture expressions cannot have been derived from these. Speaking, however, of Philo, the translator of these Targums says as follows:—

The resemblance between the doctrine of this Jewish philosopher of Alexandria and that of the apostles of Christianity, on the personality and Divine dignity of the Logos, appears throughout his work in a multitude of parallelisms. The Divine Word is *superior to all*

angels (Heb.i.4-6), He is *superior to the whole creation* (Heb.ii.8), He is *before all things* (Col.i.17, Jo.ii.2,18, v.26), He *ordered all things* (Col.i.16,26, Heb.xi.3), He *unites, preserves, and perfects the world* (Jo.iii.35, Col.i.16), He is *the First-Begotten of God* (Jo.i.18, Col.i.15), the *Son of God* (Mark i.1), the *Second God*, the *Word* (Jo.i.1,) the *Image of God* (Col.i.15, Heb.i.21,) the *intellectual Sun*, the *Light of the world* (Jo. i.4-9,viii.12), the *Fountain of wisdom* (Jo.iv.14,vii.38, 1Cor.i.24), He is *nearest to God* (Jo.i.1,xviii.11), He is *sent from God* (Jo.v.37,viii.29,42), He is the *Mediator standing between the living and the dead* (1.Tim.ii.5, Heb.viii.1-6), the *High Priest* (Heb.iv.14), the *Healer of evils* (Luke iv.18, 1Pet.ii.24), the *Advocate of mortal man* (Rom.viii.21, 1Jo.ii.1), the *Shepherd of God's Flock* (Jo.x.14, 1Pet.ii.25), He is *possessed of regal power* (1Cor.xv.25, Eph.i.21,22, Rev.xvii.14), He *liberates men from corruption and entitles them to immortality* (Rom.viii.21, 1Cor.xv.52,53, 1Pet.i.3,4), He *imparts spiritual freedom* (Jo.viii.36), He is the *sure refuge of those who seek Him* (Matt.xi.28, 1Pet.ii.25), the *heavenly bread of the soul* (Jo.vi.32,35). It was He who called to Adam in the garden, spoke to Hagar, wrestled with Jacob, and spoke to Moses from the bush. *Etheridge on the Targums, p.*22,23.

The following are some actual quotations from Philo's works, *ibid.p.*20,22 :—

Placed over the Ark and winged are the Cherubim, who represent the creative and royal power. But over these is the *Divine Word*, who does not assume a visible appearance, nor resemble anything accessible by sense, but, existing as the Image of God, is the Eldest of all things that can be known, placed nearest, and without anything intervening, to Him who alone is the Self-Existent.

It was not fitting that the soul of man should have been modelled after any created being, but after the *Word of God* . . . Every man, with respect to his understanding, is related to the *Divine Word*, being an impression, a derivation, a radiation from that blessed nature.

The *Divine Word*, about to make Himself the companion of the lonely soul, suddenly shining forth, diffuses joy unexpected and surpassing hope. God hath for His Image His most complete Word, who is His Light.

The *Eternal Word* of the Everlasting God is the strongest and steadfast support of the Universe. From the centre to the extremities, and from the utmost limit to the midst, He pervades the long range of nature, binding together all its parts. For the Father, who begat Him, hath made Him the indissoluble bond of the Universe.

For as those, who cannot look upon the Sun Himself, behold him in his reflected light, even thus do they regard the Image of God,—who is His Angel, the *Word*,—as God Himself.

Over these (things created) God hath placed His right *Word*, His First-Begotten Son, who, as the Viceroy of a mighty King, receives the charge of the sacred Flock.

To the Archangel, the *Eldest Word*, the Father of the Universe hath accorded this illustrious gift, that, standing as a Mediator, He should determine between the creature and the Creator. He is at once the Suppliant on behalf of perishing mortals to the Incorruptible, and the Ambassador of the Sovereign to His subjects.

Adorned after this manner did the High-Priest (among the Jews) proceed to the sacred rites. The twelve stones of the breastplate became the oracle of the *Word*, who holds and directs the universe. For it was needful that he, who performed the priestly rites to the Father of the world, should employ as his Advocate the Son most perfect in virtue, for the pardon of sins, and for the supply of the most abundant blessings.

Well may the translator observe, *p.*23 :—

Now, when we consider that these statements were written by the Alexandrian theologue some years before an evangelist or apostle had set pen to parchment, and, in fact, before our Saviour had begun his

> public ministry, we are shut up to the conclusion that the Divine Personality of the Word was a doctrine already believed among the Jews. In philosophy, indeed, Philo was a Platonist; and many of his speculations are strongly tinged with the colours of that school. But the Platonic learning never taught him the wonders which he has recounted of the Eternal Word. Philo was not merely a Platonist, but a Jew; and, in the theologisms we have cited, he gives expression to the traditional dogmas of his own people.

Doubtless, this is true. But these dogmas were originated by blending the Greek philosophy with Jewish modes of thought, and employing Platonic formulæ to translate the language of the old Hebrew Scriptures into that of Philo's own age. We have no reason whatever to suppose that these 'traditional dogmas' arose among the Jews from any direct supernatural Revelation. Accordingly, Dean Alford adds:—

> These instances, the number of which might be much enlarged, will serve to show how remarkably near to the diction and import of some passages in our Gospel Philo approached in speaking of the *Logos*. . . We see by this how fixed and prepared the term and many of its attributes were in the religious philosophy of the Alexandrine Jews. . . . From these elements, the Alexandrine and Jewish views of the Word or Wisdom of God, there appear to have arisen very early among Christians, both orthodox and heretic, formal expressions in which these or equivalent terms were used. Of this the Apostle Paul furnishes the most eminent example. His teacher Gamaliel united in his instruction both these elements, and they are very perceptible in the writings of his pupil. But we do not find in them any direct use of the term *Logos*, as personally applied to the Son of God. This shows him to have spoken mainly according to the Jewish school,—among whom, as Origen states, he could find none who held that 'the Word was the Son of God.' We find a much nearer approximation to the Alexandrine method of speech in the Epistle to the Hebrews, written, if not by Apollos, by some other

disciple intimately acquainted with the Alexandrine gnosis. But even then we have not the *Logos* identified personally with the Lord Jesus Christ, nor indeed personally spoken of at all, however near some passages, iv.12,13,xi.31, may seem to approach to this usage. The Alexandrine gnosis was immediately connected with Ephesus, where the Gospel of John was probably written. Apollos came thither from *Alexandria*, Acts xviii.24; and Cerinthus, [against whose views St John's Gospel is supposed by some to have been especially directed,] is related by Theodoret to have studied and formed his philosophic system in *Egypt*, before coming to Ephesus.

I have thought it good to set these statements before you from the pen of a dignitary of the Church, whose Commentary is a standard work at present for students for Holy Orders in the Church of England,—for those, at least, who have some knowledge of Greek, and desire to understand in some measure the history and origin of the Books of the New Testament. You will now comprehend the origin of many of those remarkable expressions, which are found in the first chapter of St John's Gospel and in many other parts of the New Testament. They have arisen from contact with the mixture of Platonism and Judaism, which developed itself in the philosophical schools of Alexandria. Not that there is any reason to suppose that the Apostles or the Evangelist merely *copied* their expressions from the writings of Philo; while, on the other hand, the date of Philo's writings, which are shown by internal evidence to have been composed within a few years after the crucifixion of our Lord, makes it impossible that *he* should have copied from *them*. The matter is, no doubt, to be explained by the circumstance of their 'living in a common atmosphere [of thought] and using a common language.'*

* Prof. Jowett, *Epistles*, &c., 1.p.454. 'Probably the Introduction to the Gospel of St John would never have been written, if the author had not lived in an age and place infected with that philosophical and in reality unchristian system, which assumed the proud title of knowledge (*gnosis*). For, after referring to it [the 'Word'], as he does to 'Light' and 'Life,' terms likewise desecrated by the Gnostics, he uses it no more throughout his narrative.' Dr Macbride, *Lectures on the Articles*, p.101.

Accustomed, then, to this language of the Alexandrine Schools, and adopting it as his own, the writer of this Gospel,—whether the Apostle John or not, for this point is at present very much disputed,—tells us that this Divine 'Word,' who 'was with God and was God'—'by whom all things were made'—who 'dwelt among us'—in human 'flesh,' 'full of grace and truth'—whose 'glory, as that of the only-begotten of the Father,' was manifested among men—is also the Life and Light of all mankind, 'the true Light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world.' In this way he explains that mysterious 'Light' of the inner man, which we all, as human beings, enjoy—that spiritual 'Life,' which we all feel within us, the token and pledge of our relationship to the Father of spirits.

'Rejoice in the Lord alway, and again I say Rejoice.' Let us bow our heads reverently, and thankfully acknowledge that, though we cannot understand and explain it, we can *feel* this part of the joy of Christmas-Day. It is a joy to know that the Great God is our Father, that Jesus Christ is our Brother, and we are one with Him in the embrace of Him who loves us all. These speculations respecting the Divine Nature, which occupied the minds of the sages of Greece, and stand now before our eyes crystalized, as it were, in the Creed of the Early Church, are to be regarded with reverence by us, whether we think of them as beams from the Fount of Being, raying down through the dimness of the human intellect, or as the aspirings of that intellect towards Him who is its source and origin, whose image it is, however faint. 'He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.' Man will never cease to feel after God: God will not leave His child on earth unvisited by glimpses of Himself.

Rivers to the Ocean run,
  Nor stay in all their course;
Fire ascending seeks the Sun;
  Each speeds it to its source.

So the soul that's born of God
  Pants to see His glorious Face,
Upward tends to His abode,
  To rest in His embrace.

In the words of the present Bishop (Hampden) of Hereford, *Bampton Lectures*, *p.*150—

> Let us not identify this reality—the reality of those sacred facts of Divine Providence, which we comprehensively denote by the doctrine of a Trinity in Unity — with the theories couched under a logical phraseology. I firmly believe that Word, which has declared the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. But who can pretend to that exactness of thought on the subject, on which our technical language is based? In the language of Augustine, 'Our thoughts about God are more true than our words, and His actual Being is more true than our thoughts.'

But, when these high and deep things are made the subjects of wordy war between opposing sets of thinkers, we have only to look into the history of the Church, before and after the time of Athanasius, to see what deplorable consequences ensue,—not the love of the Father, or fellowship with the Son,—not the fruits of the Spirit,—but hatred and strife, self-exaltation, and excommunication of all who differ with us. To be a disciple of Jesus,—to receive his teaching respecting the Father,—to follow his example of love, gentleness, meekness, purity, truthfulness,—it is not necessary to have a right form of words respecting things for which words are inadequate, which must be meditated upon in the sanctuary of the soul, and spoken of to those who are capable of hearing.

In those sacred human relationships of Father, Brother, to each so well known and felt, yet *so mysterious*, let us behold the embodiment of these higher mysteries, which concern our spiritual life. On the one hand, the merest child, the child of the heathen and the savage, can receive with the heart the truth, that God is our Father, that Jesus, in whom the True Light was manifested, 'which lighteth every man that cometh into the world,' is our Brother, our Elder Brother, sent to tell us and to show us of the Father's Love,—to lead us, if we will follow his footsteps, to our Eternal Home. On the other hand, the deepest thinker of us all will never fathom these mysteries, which the clearest insight will only enable him still further to penetrate a little, and, if his heart be right and pure, more deeply to adore.

VIII.

THE CHRISTIAN MINISTRY.

PREACHED ON SUNDAY MORNING, DECEMBER 31, 1865,
IN THE CATHEDRAL, MARITZBURG.

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2 Cor. i. v. 24

'NOT FOR THAT WE HAVE DOMINION OVER YOUR FAITH, BUT ARE HELPERS OF YOUR JOY: FOR BY FAITH YE STAND.'

There is a well-known saying of one, who in a former age professed his disbelief in the historical truth of the miraculous narratives recorded in the Bible,—'If St Paul had only once declared that he had himself wrought any particular miracle, I should believe him, for he was such a perfect gentleman.' He referred, no doubt especially to St Paul's manifest *truthfulness*—to his sincerity, his strong sense of honour. But, besides this, we find continual traces in St Paul's writings—as in the text before us—of a singularly gentle and courteous spirit, which characterised remarkably this great Apostle. It was not that fire was wanting in his nature—that he could not at times break forth in vehement, even passionate words, when he was moved by special circumstances,—passing (as we might think) almost beyond the limits allowed by the spirit of the Gospel. We remember how once he was carried away for a moment, under the sense of a gross insult offered to him,—to him the disciple of Gamaliel, 'a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee,'—no vulgar fellow of the 'baser sort' (if that indeed would have excused the deed), but one whose name was already known in all the churches, and honoured by multitudes of pious souls in Greece and Asia, in Cyprus and Crete, in Antioch, Ephesus, Thessa-

lonica, Philippi, Corinth, Athens, and who in learning and character, as well as piety and devotedness, was far superior to those who sat as his judges. The story is told us in Acts xxiii.1-5.

> 'And the high priest Ananias commanded them that stood by to smite him on the mouth. Then said Paul unto him, God shall smite thee, thou whited wall: for sittest thou to judge me after the law, and commandest me to be smitten contrary to the law?'

Here was a very natural burst of righteous indignation on the part of the Apostle—yet not quite after the spirit of him, who patiently bore for the Truth's sake the shame and scorn, the spitting and buffeting, and, 'as a lamb before his shearers is dumb, so opened he not his mouth.' And St Paul himself seems to have felt this, and quickly recovered his self-command, and apologised at once with his habitual courtesy.

> 'And they that stood by said, Revilest thou God's high priest? Then said Paul, I wist not, brethren, that he was the high priest: for it is written, Thou shalt not speak evil of the ruler of thy people.'

So too on some other occasions he has used severe expressions, which savour rather of the strong-willed man—of the violence of human nature—than of the 'meekness and gentleness of Christ.' When, for instance, he finds that the large and liberal views of Christianity, which he had imparted to his Galatian converts, had been corrupted by the narrow teaching of Judaizers, who sought to bring them again under bondage to the works of the Law and ceremonial observances, whereas they were 'all the *children* of God, by *faith*, in Christ Jesus'—it is no wonder that, in his deep grief at the change which had been wrought among them—those 'foolish Galatians,' as he calls them, whose feet he had once himself established 'in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free,'—but who now had been 'bewitched' no longer to 'obey the truth,' which then they had joyfully embraced, who had sacrificed that 'glorious liberty of the children of God,' and suffered themselves to be 'entangled again under the yoke of bondage,' 'turning back to the beggarly elements' of ritualism, laying stress on 'circumcision,' 'observing days and months and times and years,'—it is no wonder, I say,

that his feelings should have vented themselves, even in anathemas—though anathemas, be it noticed, of a merely general kind, and not directed against individual persons.

> 'Though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel than that which we have preached unto you, let him be *accursed!* As I said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be *accursed!*' Gal.i.8,9.

And so, in like manner, when he found the Corinthian Church distracted with party-spirit,—one saying 'I am of Paul,' another 'I am of Peter,' another 'I am of Apollos,' another 'I am of Christ,'—desiring earnestly to fix the thoughts of all on that Divine Lord, whom he then believed to be near at hand, he closes his first epistle with the words, in his own hand-writing,—

> 'The salutation of me Paul with mine own hand. If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be *accursed!* Maran-atha! The Lord cometh.'

These, however, are the only instances in all his epistles, where St Paul employs a curse against others; and in each of these cases they are *general* expressions, not personal, not directed by name against individuals.

Such words, no doubt, are not to be pressed too far towards the full meaning of which they may be capable; they are not, in their spirit, of the same kind as the mediæval excommunications; they are most probably only to be regarded as a mere popular form of strong expression, such as was current in that age,—such as the Apostle uses against himself in another passage, 'I could wish to be myself *accursed* from Christ for the sake of my brethren.' Still the Good Shepherd of the sheep never uses a curse. We may regard such expressions as indicating that St Paul was a man of like flesh and blood—like feelings and tempers—with ourselves. And the very fact, that on some few occasions the natural fervour of his spirit breaks forth in this way, shows only more plainly how entirely, as a rule, by the grace of God, he held his whole being under subjection, and had a right to 'beseech them by the meekness and gentleness of Christ,'—had a right to say, 'Be ye followers of me, as I am of Christ.'

I repeat, then, we have in the text before us an instance

of that courtesy and forbearance—that gracious, winning, manner—which distinguishes remarkably the writings of St Paul, and which has gained for him, even among unbelievers in Christianity, the character—not only of a noble man, but—of a Christian gentleman. There are some with whom such courtesy is innate, or at least is very much the result of education, the consequence of moving in good society: but then it is too often external and superficial; it extends to those only who are in the same class of life, to those who are agreeable, to those who may be serviceable,—not to the humble, the uncongenial, the despised. It is the spirit of Christ which begets true courtesy, because it begets true love to man as man; it teaches us to honour *every* man, the most abject, unlovely, and ignorant, as a child of God,—as a being of immortal hopes and fears,—as one in whom the Word of God is dwelling. It teaches us to realise our own position rightly, as that of servants in God's great household, who have each our part to do for the rest, as ministers of God's good gifts to others. It was this spirit, we know, which animated St Paul.

> 'There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. And there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of operations; but it is the same God, which worketh all in all. For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ. And the eye cannot say to the hand, I have no need of thee, nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you.'

We have each our gifts for the common good of all: and yet, whatever they may be, there is something, he tells us, beyond all gifts of this kind—there is something which makes the very essence of a Christian,—in which the humblest among us may excel the highest,—a 'perfection' which can only be attained by 'suffering:'—

> 'Now abideth Faith, Hope, Charity, these three: but the greatest of these is Charity.'

In these words of the text, however, there is probably another feature, besides the mere courtesy of the Apostle's language, which will arrest our attention. 'Not for that we have dominion over your faith,' he says. Are these

actually the words of an Apostle of Christ, addressing a flock of Christian converts of four or five years' standing? If any had a right to 'lord it' over the faith of their fellow-men, surely it would have been the Apostles themselves. And yet it seems the great Apostle of the Gentiles disclaims any such right.

How strangely does such language as this contrast with the language of some of the Formularies of the Ancient Church, which threaten damnation to all who differ from them! With such an Apostolic example before us, it is surely inconceivable that, centuries afterwards, one body and another of fallible men should presume to lay down for all future time a system of doctrines, to be believed by all as Infallible, Divine, Eternal, Truth, on pain of eternal death,—still more that in an age like this, of great mental activity and progress, any among us should be found asserting—

> What the Catholic Church, while yet one, during the first thousand years of her history, under the Spirit's guidance, in her great Councils, declared to be, or received as, the true faith, that *is* the true faith, and that we receive as such. More than this we are not bound to acknowledge: *less we may not.*

Why does St Paul in all his epistles discuss, reason, argue, with his converts, as a man with living men—appeal to their own hearts—to their own sense of right—to their own understandings—'I speak as unto wise men, judge ye what I say'—'Prove all things, hold fast that which is good'—if the Gospel which he preached was capable of being shut up in certain words and phrases, and accredited for ever by portents and prodigies, with tremendous penalties for disbelief? If the essential Truths of Christianity are indeed, as we believe, Divine and Eternal, it is impossible that they should be compressed into any formulæ of man's imagining—much less be expressed for all ages in the language, and according to the modes of thought, of an unenlightened and ignorant age, when—not to speak of their entire want of acquaintance with the results of modern critical or physical science—hardly any of the Fathers knew anything of Hebrew, and even Augustine knew nothing of Greek? How plain it

is that Christianity, in order to show its Divine Original, must adapt itself to meet the circumstances of every age, —must be ready to satisfy the critic and philosopher, if only they come with pious hearts, earnestly seeking to know God's Truth, as well as the unlearned and simple-minded,—must court, not shrink from, inquiry in an inquiring age, and be ready to abandon whatever of its traditionary system will not stand the test of examination —whatever God's Light, which is given us to walk in, may show to be unsound and untrue.

I doubt not for one moment that, when all these accretions of later growth are taken away, as they surely will be by the progress of scientific research, the true Divine Beauty of Christianity—of the religion of Christ—of the religion which Jesus taught, and in the practice of which he lived and died—will shine out with greater lustre than ever. I doubt not—nay, I am sure—that the Gospel of Christ, in its deepest, fullest, sense,—though wearing the outward garb, as any message addressed to human beings must at first have done, of the thoughts and knowledge of the time in which it was originally given forth,—will appeal in all ages to what is deepest in man, and call his inner sense to 'taste and see that the Lord is gracious.' But it is vain to shut our eyes to the signs of the times. We are living in an eventful age—a glorious, but momentous, period in the history of our race: and each one of us must do our part in it. Old forms of thought—old systems of belief—are undoubtedly being 'shaken' and 'removed,' as 'things that are made' by man's devices, but only so that the Eternal Truths, 'those things which cannot be shaken, may remain.'

We are sure of this, because we are sure that our Father in Heaven is above us—that God is with us—His Presence brightens, His Providence ordains, the path in which we are to go—and in His Light we shall see Light. If, indeed, we do not believe this—if we do not know that God is good,—if our hope is altogether a lie,—if this fair earth, which we see with our bodily eyes, is the property of the Evil One,—if that bright world of truth and goodness, of which we discern glimpses in the lives and in the writings of saints and sages from the beginning,—of which also we have clear revelations in the centre of our own

moral being,—is only a system of notions, which are necessary to keep the human animal in health, comfort, and order in this life, or to save him from perdition in the next,—then, indeed, the ministers of religion, if they understand their vocation, will deal in promises and threats alone, will carefully stop up the avenues of light, will discourage firmly the exercise of thought, and instead of appealing to Reason will stigmatise it as a deceiver, and say that they hear, in the march of human progress, 'the coming footfalls of the great Antichrist.' In one word, the adage would then be true, 'If ignorance were bliss, 'twere folly to be wise.'

But it is far otherwise if we regard the light of Christianity as the light of a Father's Love—as the light of a Divine Revelation, which is meant to penetrate every part of our spiritual being, that every faculty of it may find its due employ as a servant of God,—

> And all our powers, with all their might,
> In His sole glory may unite.

Then we shall have no fear of the result in an age like this of searching inquiry into subjects, which for long periods have been left unexamined, or many of which have never been duly examined at all. For we shall be certain of these two things—first, that, in using our best mental powers in such inquiries, we are best pleasing God, and doing the will of Him who has aroused this spirit of investigation in the age in which we live, and in which He calls us to do our part;—secondly, that when all this work is done, no portion of Eternal Truth can ever be lost—it is safe in the keeping—not of Churches and Councils, enforcing belief in doctrines and creeds by excommunications and anathemas—but in the keeping of Him who is Himself the Truth, and by His Spirit will maintain a permanent supply of the True Bread of Life for the hearts of His children.

But, I repeat again, the age is one of earnest searching inquiry, and we must not shrink from our duty as living men, we must not fear the consequences of a faithful discharge of that duty. Let us hear the noble words of one of our greatest living statesmen,* which the mail has just brought to us:—

* *Mr Gladstone in his Farewell Address at Edinburgh University.*

Christianity has sealed and stamped the title of our race as the crown and flower of the visible creation; and, with this irreversible sentence in their favour, the studies, well called studies of humanity, should not resent nor fear, but should favour and encourage, all other noble research, having for its object the globe on which we live, the tribes with which it is peopled in land, air, and sea, the powers drawn forth from nature or yet latent in her unexplored recesses, or the spaces of that vast system, 'beyond the world's flaming walls,' to which our earth belongs.

But more than this, we live in times when the whole nature of our relation to the unseen world is widely, eagerly, and assiduously questioned. Sometimes we are told of general laws, so conceived as to be practically independent either of a lawgiver or a judge,—sometimes of a necessity working all things to uniform results, but seeming to crush and to bury under them the ruins of our will, our freedom, our personal responsibility,—sometimes of a private judgment, which we are to hold upon the hard condition of taking nothing upon trust, of passing by, at the outset of our mental life, the whole preceding education of the world, of owning no debt to those who have gone before without a regular process of proof, in a word, of beginning anew each man for himself. Such are the fancies which go abroad. Such are the clouds which career in heaven, and pass between us and the sun, and make men idly think that what they see not is not, and blot the prospects of what is, in so many and such true respects, a happy and a hopeful age.

It is, I think, an observation of St Augustine, that those periods are critical and formidable, when the power of putting questions runs greatly in advance of the pains to answer them. Such appears to be the period in which we live. And all among us, who are called in any manner to move in the world of thought, may well ask, Who is sufficient for these things? Who can with just and firm hand *sever the transitory from the durable*, and *the accidental from the essential* in *old opinions?* Who can combine, in the measures

which reason would prescribe, *reverence and gratitude to the past* with a sense of the *new claims, new means, new duties,* of the *present?* Who can be stout and earnest to do battle for the Truth, and yet hold sacred, as he ought, the freedom of inquiry, and cherish, as he ought, a chivalry of controversy, like the ancient chivalry of arms?

One persuasion, at least, let us embrace; one error let us avoid. Let us be persuaded of this, that Christianity *will by her inherent resources find for herself a philosophy equal to all the shifting and all the growing wants of the time.* Let us avoid the error of seeking to cherish a *Christianity of isolation.* The Christianity, which is now and hereafter to flourish, and, through its power in the inner circles of human thought, to influence ultimately, in some manner more adequate than now, the masses of mankind, must be such as of old the 'Wisdom of God' was described. 'For in her is an understanding spirit, holy, one only, manifold, subtil, lively, clear, undefiled, plain, not subject to hurt, loving the thing that is good, quick, which cannot be letted, ready to do good, kind to man, steadfast, sure, free from care, overseeing all things. For she is the brightness of the Everlasting Light, the unspotted mirror of the Power of God, and the image of His Goodness.' *Wisd.* vii.22-26. It must be filled full with human and genial warmth, in close sympathy with every true instinct and need of man, regardful of the just titles of every faculty of his nature, apt to associate with and make its own all, under whatever name, which goes to enrich and enlarge the patrimony of the race.

I need not say how totally different *this* Christianity is from the narrow spirit of ecclesiasticism, which checks all honest inquiry into the past or the present,—which frowns upon every attempt to reconcile the religious teaching of the day with the certain results of Modern Science,—which condemns with sour anathemas every endeavour to show that there are essential truths at the basis of popular beliefs, though greatly overlaid by a mass of traditionary rubbish,—which enforces with censures, depriv-

ations, excommunications, the most rigid adherence to the letter of Church Formularies, composed under totally different circumstances from those of our own age—amidst the thoughts and feelings—in the language—and according to the notions—of an earnest, well-meaning, but illiterate and unscientific time. The preachers of *such* a Christianity would shrink indeed from 'lording' it over their brethren, by whom they would hope themselves to be benefitted. Like the Apostles of old, they would not be claiming to 'have dominion over their faith,' but seeking, with whatever gifts they had, to 'be helpers of their joy.'

Joy—the joy of an intelligent Christian—not a mere vapour of the animal nature, the result of excited nerves, of exalted fancy, but—the joy, which alone is worthy of man's high spiritual nature, which springs up in a healthy mind, in a renewed soul, from the perception of the Excellence of THAT WHICH IS, from the mental vision of the Goodness of God, of the beauty, the wisdom, the perfections, of His ways and works,—is indeed a most choice and blessed thing,—not to be gained at once, so as to be lost, perhaps, as easily,—but gained as the result of thought and labour, or, it may be, of sorrow and suffering. But such joy, we know, has proved stronger than death, than suffering worse than death,—has filled the lips with thanksgivings upon the bed of pain, in the dreary dungeon,—has made the martyr triumph and the victim prove the conqueror.

And we, ministers, are to be 'helpers of your joy.' How shall we best do this? Not by ignoring ourselves the signs of the times,—not by shutting our eyes to the intellectual Light, which streams around us on every side, and fancying that we can keep others in easy contented ignorance as well as ourselves,—not by frightening our flocks into a temporary panic, and renunciation of their reasoning powers, by telling them that each step which they take, in the road of free thought and free inquiry, is a step towards the bottomless abyss of infidelity and atheism,—not by trying to arouse their zeal, and nourish a fictitious, unreal, faith, by the common practice of blackening the names of others, and accusing them of heresy

and blasphemy,—not by any of these unsafe, unrighteous, and ultimately unavailing processes, which can only succeed for a time with the weak and timorous, but must assuredly in the end be found to fail, if attempted to be used as weapons in the service of the God of Truth.

No! not in this way shall we, ministers of Christ—we, clergy of a Protestant Church—be 'helpers of your joy,' my brethren. We must bear the burden of the age ourselves in the first place; we must bear it painfully, that we may help you joyfully to bear it. We must have the film cleared from our own eyes first, that we may assist you to see. We must step off first ourselves from the sandbank of tradition, and wade through the turbulent stream of modern thought and controversy,—though the strong under-current of prejudices may threaten to sweep us away,—though the winds of popular opinion, and the waves of Church authority, may seem not unlikely to overwhelm us,—and though at times our own foot may be unsteady, our own eyes dimmed with doubts and uncertainties, our own hearts faint, and ready almost to turn back to the sand-heap we had left, if still we may but reach it, and stretch our weary limbs once more upon it, in barren rest and dreaming indolence.

But no! we must not do this: the sacred call of God has roused us, to be in His hand, each in our measure, the succourers of our brethren, the 'helpers of their joy.' *We know that the sand-bank cannot stand,*—that the waters are rising daily around it, higher and higher,—that, like those islands, which from time to time are raised of crumbling, volcanic matter, and which the waves of the great Atlantic wash away, so the accumulated mass of mere traditionary teaching—with the tangled seaweed, sand, and shells, the 'accretions' and 'developments,' which the lapse of two thousand years, or even of 'the first thousand years of the Church's history,' has heaped upon it,—must give way at last, and at no very distant day, before the advancing waves of Science. Knowing this, my brethren, foreseeing plainly this, we must ourselves press through the difficulties which we find before us—trusting that God Himself is with us, who has called us to this duty, and knowing that beneath us are the 'Everlasting Arms'—until we

shall reach the solid Rock, and feel our feet based firmly upon the Eternal Truth; and then we may return to help our brethren over.

Listen further to these admirable words, which I extract from the address of the Ven. Archdeacon Sandford at the recent Church Congress in Norwich,—words spoken in the presence of, at least, two Bishops of our Church and a vast body of the Clergy, and spoken without reproof from any of them, though one portion of them must, I think, have struck reproach to the hearts of some who were then present.

> I say in this venerable assembly, in the presence of learned and beloved prelates and doctors of the Church, and of some of its wisest and ablest sons, that he is the truly loyal, reverential, truth-loving inquirer, who at every step into the arcana of Science and Revelation, with an eye that never quails and a heart that never falters, though with a still awe in which at times he may hear his own heart beat, asks simply, 'What do these phenomena and these facts and utterances mean? What is written in physical formation, and human physiognomy and speech, and ancient narrative, and sacred page? What do these rocks, these strata, these flints, these fossil-bones, these vestiges of an age which seems to antedate the records of history, exhumed by the human hand or unveiled by the finger of God,—what do these things mean? What are those apparent discrepancies between traditional interpretation of Scripture and the evidence of his senses,—between current belief or established system, and what modern science and learning and philology are divulging?'
>
> And he is no true believer of the truth itself, who enters on these inquiries with a biassed judgment and a mind made up, or who recoils from any legitimate conclusions, to which patient, profound, prayerful, and reverent investigation will lead him, because these seem at variance with preconceived opinion or popular tradition. I do not mean for a moment that any are to arrogate to themselves the right of judgment, either in Science or Theology, from which inadequate

knowledge or slender capacities, or want of experience, may preclude them; nor do I mean that in any case they are justified in rejecting the accumulated wisdom and verified experience of the past; nor do I mean that in any case they are prematurely to announce (even when they appear to have reason for disputing an established system) what greater learning and research may prove to be fallacious. On the contrary, the acutest intellects, the profoundest philosophers, the ripest scholars, have always been the most cautious and reticent, slow in forming their conclusions, and slower still in announcing them. . . . But I say that, as students and as teachers in these investigations, we are bound to call no man master, in indolent and servile subjection of the intellects which God has given us,—to endorse no facts, which we have taken no pains to authenticate,—to announce nothing as an indisputable verity, upon which minds may rest and souls repose, which we have received ourselves merely second-hand, without inquiry, from others. Above all, we are not in this day to *condemn writings which we have never read, or systems which we have never investigated, or motives of which the Searcher of Hearts alone can judge.*

I will ask what discovery has ever been made, what truth has ever been elicited, what benefit has ever been conferred, in arts, in civilisation, in liberty, and in religion, without opposition, and without a struggle? Where would have been the benefits conferred on mankind by those God-taught men, Newton, and Galileo, and Copernicus, and Jenner, and the fathers of our modern divines,—where would have been what we all hold as more solid and dear, the right, or rather the responsibility, of private judgment, the enlightening and saving truths of the Gospel, the 'liberty wherewith Christ has made *us* free,'—where would have been Christianity itself, or where, when that became debased and obscured, the rights of the Reformed Churches,—had the opposition in former days succeeded in *coercing the consciences*, or *repressing thought*, or *discouraging inquiry?* In fact, human theories are rejected in one day and accepted in the

next; the martyr of to-day becomes the hero of to-morrow; and multitudes in every age of the world have lived to embrace as truth what they once opposed and calumniated. There is, indeed, a 'philosophy,' of which we have heard this day, 'that is vain,' and a 'science that is falsely so-called,' and a 'knowledge which puffeth up,' just as there is a theology, which teaches us to condemn the truth of God, which teaches for commandments of God what are but the traditions of men. But there is also a 'Wisdom which is from above,' and Science which is the handmaid of religion, and a Learning which helps the soul to God, and a 'Charity that edifies' and 'never fails.' I am quite convinced that the 'true and undefiled Religion' has nothing to fear from advancing Learning, the investigation of Science, or the exercise of enlightened human Thought, but that these will confirm the Revelation of Scripture.

We must seek then, brethren, to be quickeners of your hope and 'helpers of your joy,' by seeking to deepen the foundations of your *faith*—'for by faith ye stand'—not faith in an orthodox form of words, which may be professed, and, such as it is, may often exist abundantly, where the life is unfaithful, unclean, and false, but faith in the Living God Himself—a faith that 'worketh by love.'

It is God's will that we shall not have *certainty* in this world—that we shall 'walk by faith and not by sight'—that we shall 'stand by faith'—by grasping with the hand of the soul the Hand Unseen of our Father in Heaven. In this way, His Wisdom knows, we shall best be trained for our work here and for our Home hereafter. If all were made plain and clear before us,—if all were proved to demonstration beforehand,—if the senses and the understanding were thoroughly satisfied that nothing could be otherwise than as we expect or as we can calculate,—there would then be no ground for faith, for that truly human faculty which looks confidently for the final triumph of Truth and Goodness, which looks to God, the Good, the True, through all the clouds of sense, sees Him *behind* the cloud, through all the shocks of time and fate grasps His sustaining Hand. This, I say, is a truly

human faculty, which as reasonable beings we all possess, each in our own measure. We have only to retire each into himself to feel that, what we see and hear and touch, and what we can infer from all which those senses tell us, is not our whole existence, is not our very selves. We have done wrong—or right; our hearts ache and shrink, or they throb with conscious self-assertion, or look for the sympathy of others who are good,—most of all for the approbation of One, who 'seeth in secret and will reward openly.' But it is not rewards that our souls desire, or punishments that they fear. What man with a spark of generous feeling, would accept a reward for what he had done out of pure love or a sacred sense of duty? Who, with a genuine feeling of penitence, of deep contrition, of self-abhorrence, would bate an *iota* of the suffering that was *due* for his transgression? No! the fear, which is (in the words of our great living poet) 'our ghastliest doubt,' is lest there should be no One in the upper sphere to receive us when we aspire towards Him,—lest we should be left in our self-degradation, to sink, and sink, unchastened, unrestrained.

Yet this fear—this 'ghastly doubt'—the adherents of the old traditionary system do not hesitate to foment, by saying, 'Unless you receive all our dicta, however revolting to reason, however contradicted by the revelations of Modern Science, you must sink into absolute Atheism, you will be left 'without hope, without God, in the world.' If 'without God,' then 'without hope' indeed! But we have not so learned the lessons of the Gospel from the lips of Jesus Christ Himself. We 'stand by faith': but let our faith stand, not propped by the frail supports of man's devising, by the dogmas of an Infallible Book or an Infallible Church, but firmly based with its foundations deep in the Rock of God's Eternal Truth and Love. Let us trust Him who has revealed Himself to us—not in the Scriptures only, and to the hearts of our fellow-men in other ages, but in our own hearts also, as our Father and Friend, as our Faithful Creator, the object of our faith, the end of our hope, the goal of our desires,—whose children we are, whose glorious perfections are faintly shadowed forth in human excellencies,—whose Living Word, that has spoken to us 'at sundry times and in divers manners,' by the lips

of prophets and apostles of old, and by the voice of Jesus Christ our Lord, is speaking to us still—commanding, reproving, exhorting, comforting,—is present even with the heathen world, as the Light of their eyes, the Life of their souls, whenever they choose the good, and reject the evil, 'walking by faith and not by sight,'—but will be heard in our hearts continually, if we will only listen, saying, 'This is the way: walk ye in it.'

Faith, then, is a living trust in God, and Hope is the joyous expectation which springs from that trust, and both are but handmaids to that divine faculty of Love, which is better thought of as the 'strong Son of God' Himself, who is present in the soul. May 'these three abide' with us now and for ever! And may we grow each day more and more in that spirit, which drew from Richard Baxter in his latter days, when ripening fast for Heaven, that memorable confession:—

> I can never believe that a man may not be saved by that religion, which doth but bring him to the true love of God, and to a heavenly mind and life, nor that God will ever cast a soul into hell that truly loveth Him.

*** I quote here some other words, which also the last mail has brought us, and which were spoken by a layman, (J. J. Murphy, Esq.,) who describes himself as 'a member of our Church by deliberate conviction,' at the 'Annual Diocesan Conference' of the dioceses of Down and Connor and Dromore, on Oct. 25, in a paper written by him for the Conference at the express request of the Bishop of those dioceses, who was present in the Chair, and uttered not a word to check or correct these outspoken statements of the truth. On this account—as well as because of their intrinsic excellence—I think it well to quote them at greater length.

> Listen to any conversation on the question concerning the nature and extent of the inspiration accorded to the writers of the Holy Scriptures, and you will be very fortunate if you do not hear it

said, with more or less circumlocution or more or less dogmatism, that every word of the Holy Scriptures must be infallibly true; because, if there were any possibility of error in it, we should be at a loss what to believe, or because it would be *dangerous* to doubt it . . . . If the Holy Scriptures are on all points infallibly accurate, this must admit of proof, and must be important to prove. But, whether it is so or not, the reason so often given for believing it is absolutely worthless; for it is utterly impossible for us to know, except in so far as it is declared to us, in what manner and under what conditions and limitations it may please the Inspiring Spirit to communicate Divine Truth. More, it is not only worthless as an argument,—it is presumptuous, thus to imply that we can say beforehand and independently of proof, in what way God will make His Revelation, or whether He will make any Revelation at all. Indeed, the argument for the infallible truth of the Scriptures, because it is presumed that we need such a guide, is not one whit better than the parallel argument for the infallible authority of the Church.

And the assertion, that a doctrine is *dangerous*, does not, and cannot, in any way, produce the slightest effect at all on those whose only care is for what is true. . . . Of course, it may be said that only truth is safe and that error is dangerous. I believe this: every one must believe it who believes that Wisdom will at last be justified of her children. But I say that we are so constituted, and the world in which we are placed for our trial and discipline is so constituted, that we have no possible means of judging whether a religious doctrine is *safe* or not, except by ascertaining whether it is true. . . . And all great and fruitful religious movements—notably the Reformation—have been effected by men who never thought of 'safety' at all. Had the Continental Reformers made a calculation about 'safety'—I do not mean safety of body or goods, but the spiritual safety of the Church—it is probable that the best of them would have drawn back, and not fled from known evils to unknown dangers. But they 'walked

by faith, not by sight;' they reasoned, if they reasoned at all, that Wisdom would in the end be 'justified of her children,' and that the way of truth, in the long run, would prove to be the way of safety, and the result was the Reformation. . . .

> My faith is large in time, and Him
> Who works it to some perfect end.

I believe that a want of this patience which comes of faith,—a want of the patience which can await the slow unveiling of the plans of Divine Providence,—has been the true and ultimate cause of all those attempts, always blundering, and often sinful, which have been made by Christian Churches to crush religious dissent and keep back scientific progress. . . . The philosophy of every age gets entwined with its theology, and, when doubt is cast on the philosophy, the theology feels as if it also was attacked. The best and the best-known instance of this is the persecution of Galileo by the Roman Inquisition. The ostensible ground of accusation against him was, that he taught the motion of the earth, contrary to the declaration of Scripture, that the earth should not be removed for ever. But I have little doubt that this was only, as it were, the *immediate issue* on which a trial depended, which really involved much more extensive interests. The questions really at stake were, whether the old theological notions of the Universe, which were supposed to be deduced from Scripture [rather, which actually *were* deduced from Scripture]—were true—whether the Earth, where God had been made manifest in the flesh, was the actual geometrical centre of the Universe, and whether there was a definite place above the visible starry heavens, where God might be believed to have his dwelling. Galileo's doctrine of the motion of the Earth round the Sun threatened to abolish this venerable, intelligible, reasonable, and Scriptural system of ideas concerning the structure of the Universe; and we ought not to wonder nor condemn, if really good men felt seriously alarmed at Galileo's new and wild notions. . . .

A very similar set of questions arose almost within

living memory. It had been the general traditional belief of Christendom, grounded on a few misinterpreted [?] passages of Scripture, that the Universe was created in six days of twenty-four hours each, and that animals were not originally created mortal, but became so in consequence of man's first sin. When the discoveries of Geology proved these to be wrong,—when proof came to light that the world had existed for millions of years before the human race was created, and when the strata under our feet were found to be full of the dead shells and bones of the animals that lived and died during those millions of years,—we cannot wonder if unbelievers thought they had at last found a convincing argument against the claims of Scripture on our belief, nor ought we to wonder or condemn, if many good men felt alarmed at this shock of their established notions.

Then began those attempts, of which our literature was so full twenty or thirty years ago, to 'harmonize Scripture with Science'—in other words, to prove that the first chapter of the Mosaic Book of Genesis contains geological truth. All these attempts have failed, and I trust we have seen the last of them. But, were any of them to succeed, while it solved one difficulty, it would raise an infinitely greater one; for it would be one of the greatest conceivable difficulties if it were proved that the Holy Spirit commenced the work of Revelation by revealing truths of mere physical Science. . . .

It is not in virtue of any arguments, however sound, that men have ceased to feel any opposition between their faith and the truths of Geology. It is because new ideas are alarming only while they are new. They cease to be alarming when they become familiar, and, if they are true, they make their way into general belief . . . . One of the best-established truths of Geology, though more recently established than some of the other great truths of the Science, is that the whole Earth was never under water at once. . . . It would no longer be possible to find any one who has studied Astronomy, and remains unconvinced of the motion of the Earth; nor would it be possible to find

any one who has studied Geology, and remains unconvinced by the evidence of the very high antiquity of the Earth, the universality of the law of death in the animal creation [before the first man's sin], and the *local* character of all deluges.

In an age like the present, when everything, not only in nature, but in human history, is subjected to scientific research,—when Science explores not only the heavens above us, the earth below us, and the nerves and the blood within us, but endeavours to apply the same methods of research that have proved so successful in the exploration of nature, in order to elucidate the migration of ancient nations, the derivation of languages, the origin of laws among men, the legendary history of Rome, the historical poems of Greece, and the religious books of ancient Persia and India, we cannot expect that the historical authorities of our religion should be alone unexamined, nor could we wish it. It would be the greatest imaginable disparagement to the Holy Scriptures, if they were to be passed by without notice, or with a mere uncritical familiarity, by scholars who are willing to bestow all the resources of a cultivated understanding on every line of a Homeric poem, and every letter of a Babylonian or Ninevite inscription.

But the first result of this critical study is one that apparently was not foreseen, though it is the most natural that can be. The first result—not the last result—of the examination of this subject is to disclose its difficulties. Ignorance sees no difficulties; partial knowledge sees them, and recoils before them; complete knowledge sees past them, and removes them. To mention a very obvious and well-known instance —one might read through the books of Exodus and Deuteronomy, chapter by chapter, without perceiving that *those two Books contain different versions of the Decalogue:* but a critical study discloses this fact at once. . . .

On this subject we often hear it said that Christianity has nothing to *fear* from sound criticism. But this in my opinion is a most lame and most inadequate statement. I believe that Christianity has everything to

hope from sound criticism; and I believe that one of the most desirable of all improvements in the working of our Church would be such an increase of Hebrew and Greek learning among our clergy, as would make them more competent to deal with subjects demanding critical knowledge. Now, if our bishops and clergy believe this, as I am sure they do, how are we to account for the outburst of indignation and terror, with which they have received some recent attempts at a somewhat destructive Biblical criticism? . . . .
The result is not difficult to predict. Critical Science will continue to make progress. Rash and false criticism will be supplanted by sound and true criticism. Our traditional beliefs will be confirmed on some points, and probably, *modified on others*. At last, after a generation or two of controversy, Critical Science and its results will be incorporated into men's habitual thoughts, as Astronomy and Geology have been, and then the trial will be over . . . .
In conclusion, I fear I shall be told that what I have said is very unsatisfactory. I admit it, but this is at present inevitable . . . . A generation or two, perhaps, must pass before a satisfactory and exhaustive treatment of these subjects becomes possible . . . . What I have said comes to little more than this. Faith is old; Science and Criticism are new; and, where their results appear to be in any degree at variance, no formula for reconciling them is possible. But neither is it necessary. Time will do all. And, while the time is passing, it is the duty of those men, who have received scientific and critical talents, to make the fullest and best use of them they can, and for us all to cultivate the *love of truth*, and to preserve our *temper*, our *patience*, and our *faith*.

IX.

HOLY BAPTISM.

PREACHED ON SUNDAY MORNING, JAN. 7, 1866,* IN THE CATHEDRAL, MARITZBURG.

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1 Cor. i. 17.

'FOR CHRIST SENT ME NOT TO BAPTIZE, BUT TO PREACH THE GOSPEL.'

What a remarkable contrast there is between St Paul's words in this passage, and his general practice as intimated by this language, and the doctrine taught on the subject of baptism by many ancient writers and by not a few in our own day. St Paul evidently regarded the office of 'baptizing' as inferior at all events to that with which he himself was specially entrusted—the 'preaching of the Gospel.' He says,—

> 'I thank God that I baptized none of you but Crispus and Gaius; lest any should say that I had baptized in my own name. Yes! I baptized also the household of Stephanas: besides, I know not whether I baptized any other. For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the Gospel.

He committed the work of baptizing to some inferior agents; while he devoted himself to that great work which was entrusted to him, of preaching to all around the 'unsearchable riches of Christ.' But so, too, we read of his Divine Master, Jo.iv.1,2,

> 'Jesus made and baptized more disciples than John—though *Jesus himself baptized not*, but his disciples.'

Were those disciples themselves baptized? We have no

* On this day, at an early special Service, the Dean of Maritzburg published in the Cathedral the Bishop of Capetown's (so-called) "Sentence of Excommunication."

record whatever of the fact—no indication that they were —except some of them, perhaps, with the baptism of John. And surely, in such a case as this, the *negative* evidence—the entire silence about the baptism of any of them—must rather be regarded as a positive proof that they were *not* baptized,—that they were merely called by their Great Head, and received at once into the number of his chosen followers, but not baptized by him.

How very different is the language used about the rite of Baptism in the writings of some of the early Fathers of the Church! By them it was dignified with a number of high-sounding appellations. It was called the 'Divine Indulgence,' the 'Absolution and Remission of sins,' the 'Regeneration of the soul,' the 'Water of life,' the 'Divine Fountain,' the 'Spiritual Birth, by which God was made the Father of men, and the holy Church their Mother.' One says,—

> We call it the gift, and grace, and unction, and illumination, and garment of immortality, and laver of regeneration, and seal or character, and whatever else is precious or honourable.

Another calls it, 'the layman's priesthood.' Augustine says, 'The Christians of Carthage most excellently call baptism nothing else than salvation.' I need not remind you what furious conflicts were caused by the strong views held on this subject of baptism by some of the ancient Bishops,—how, as Mosheim tells us, the Asiatic Christians, determining a point which had been left hitherto undecided, resolved that all 'heretics' should be rebaptized 'before their admission to the communion of the Church' —how Stephen, bishop of Rome, 'broke communion with them' for this, and 'excluded them from the communion of *his* Church'—how Cyprian, with the rest of the African bishops, 'adopted the opinion of the Asiatics, and gave notice thereof to the imperious Stephen'—how Stephen rebuked him 'with many threatenings and invectives,' and Cyprian 'replied with great force and resolution,'—and how finally the former, 'by a decree full of invectives, which was received with contempt, excommunicated the African Bishops.'

Such things took place in those early unenlightened

days of violent controversies, when men thought to serve God, and to maintain what they believed to be God's Truth, by sentences of excommunication and anathema. In those days also there were exorcists, whose special office was to conjure the devil out of the candidate for baptism. In those days a doctor of the Church could write:—

> Hold thou most firmly, nor do thou in any respect doubt, that infants, whether in their mothers' wombs they begin to live and there die, or when, after their mothers have given birth to them, they pass from this life without the sacrament of holy baptism, will be punished with the everlasting punishment of eternal fire—will suffer the endless torments of hell, where the Devil with his angels is to burn for evermore.

Well might Bishop Watson exclaim upon such words:—

> Parent of universal good! Merciful Father of the human race! How hath the benignity of Thy nature been misrepresented—how hath the Gospel of Thy Son been misinterpreted, by the burning zeal of presumptuous man!

The above was the language of Fulgentius, who lived about a century after the time of Augustine. The words of the latter great Father of the African Church are generally more mild. He sometimes taught that infants dying unbaptized were under condemnation, but so gentle, that probably that state would be better than not being at all, and consequently that neither they nor their parents would have any reason to wish that they 'had never been born.' His language is very remarkable, more especially with reference to its bearing on the dogma of Endless Punishment:—

> I do not say that infants dying without the baptism of Christ will be punished with so great pain, as that it were better for them not to have been born; since our Lord spoke this, not of all sinners, but of the most profligate and impious ones. For, if in the day of judgment some shall be punished in a more tolerable degree than others, as he said of the men of Sodom, and would be understood not of them only, who can doubt but that infants unbaptized, who have

> only Original Sin, and are not loaded with any sins of their own, will be in the gentlest condemnation of all? Which as I am not able to define what or how great it will be, so I dare not say that it would be better for them not to be at all, than to be in that state.

But even Augustine elsewhere writes more fiercely, in the heat of theological controversy:—

> Our Lord will come to judge the quick and the dead; and he will make two sides, the right and the left. To those on the left hand he will say, *Depart into everlasting fire*: to those on the right, *Come, receive the kingdom.* He calls one, *the kingdom,* the other, *condemnation with the Devil.* There is no middle place left, where you can put infants.

And again:—

> Thus I have explained to you what is *the kingdom,* and what, *everlasting fire;* so that, when you confess the infant will not be in *the kingdom,* you must acknowledge he will be in *everlasting fire.*

And so before him Tertullian:—

> Without baptism there is no salvation for any person.

And after him Gregory the Great:—

> Some are taken from this present life before they come to have any good or ill deserts by their own deeds, and having not the sacrament of salvation for their deliverance from 'Original Sin,' though they have done nothing of their own here, yet there they come to torments—they undergo eternal torments.

We see here the consequence of too closely following the mere letter of Scripture, and reasoning upon its figurative expressions, as if they were distinct authoritative statements of absolute infallible truth. But that light of our inner man, that sense of right and wrong, which we possess as men, by the Living Word that dwells within us, has not allowed men to sit down for ever content with these conclusions of fallible fellow-men, however supported by Scripture quotations or enforced by appeals to Church authority—like that on which Augustine lays stress, when he says—

> Whoever should affirm that infants, which die without partaking of this sacrament, shall be quickened in Christ, would both go against the apostles' preaching, and also would condemn *the whole Church.*

The love which beats within a mother's bosom, for the tender little one which presses her breast,—a love, which she *knows* must come from God, and bear witness of His Love to us all,—a fact this, which cannot be predicated with equal certainty of the opinions of a number of ancient unmarried bishops or ascetical monks, whose narrow judgments have so often swayed, and so injuriously, the 'whole Church' during the 'first thousand years of its history,' and after it—I say, this witness for God's Eternal Love, which He Himself has planted in the breast of every human parent, who is not sunk in debasing vice and profligacy, will rebel continually—has ever rebelled—against these harsh iniquitous dicta, and in earlier days than these in which we live has tried to make a door of escape out of the dark horrors of such a Creed. Augustine, as we have seen, and others, would sometimes speak of the punishment of unbaptized infants as being so 'mild,' that probably their state was better than not being at all—in other words, was a desirable state, a state of positive happiness, even in hell. The Pelagians taught that baptism was needed—not for entrance into *eternal life,* but—for admission into the *kingdom of heaven,* so that, if they died unbaptized, they would miss the latter blessing, but not the former—they would enjoy eternal life, but in a different place from the baptized, eternally separated from God and their parents. Others, and very great authorities, have held that the proper punishment of 'Original Sin,' when there was no actual sin added to it—that is, the proper doom of unbaptized infants—was to suffer the negative punishment of *loss,*—loss of heavenly joy and the sight of God,—but not the punishment of *sense,* of positive torment. And so they invented what they called the *limbus puerorum,* 'the children's quarter,' where unbaptized infants will suffer no other torment or condemnation but the loss of heaven. It is true, there still met them—these Schoolmen of the Middle Ages of whom I am speaking—that dogma of the ancient Fathers—

> We must believe most firmly, and make no question of it, that they are tormented with eternal fire.

But they explained it away most ingeniously thus:—

> To be punished by that fire may be understood two ways—either with the *heat* of it, or with the *darkness* of it. They that have actual sins will be punished with the *heat*, but the others only with the *darkness* of it, as wanting the sight of God.

But 'darkness without heat,' as one has said, can hardly be called 'fire.' And, as the same writer observes, a great authority in our own Church on the subject of Infant Baptism:*—

> The doctrine of eternal torments finds a difficulty in sinking into men's belief, *if they have considered what eternity is*, when it is applied to the case of wicked men. Much more in the case of infants, who have in their own persons not known or committed good or evil, and have only the stain of nature. And our Saviour, speaking of grown men, says, *They shall be beaten with few stripes, if they be ignorant persons, and such as knew not their master's will.* How much more must that hold in the case of infants, who never were capable of any sense at all about it!

Accordingly, when we come further down towards the age of the Reformation, we find a milder language used on this subject, though men's thoughts were still very much clogged and hampered by the old traditionary teaching as to the consequences of 'Original Sin,' supposed to have been incurred by us all through the sin of Adam. One charge against the martyr John Huss was that he 'held the salvation of infants that by mischance die unbaptized.' But even a Romish Cardinal (Cajetan) ventured to say of such infants,—

> It is not unreasonable to say that Baptism *in the desire of the parents* is in such case of necessity sufficient for salvation:—

but, he says, he 'speaks under correction.' And he has been corrected; for some, for his saying this, have called

* Dr Wall, *History of Infant Baptism*, II.p.209, in which work will be found most of the authorities quoted in this Sermon.

him a 'heretic,' while others have pronounced his teaching to be 'rash and erroneous.' Another writer of the Roman Church (Cassander) is also bold enough to encourage afflicted parents to entertain some hopes, and to pray earnestly for their child, though dying unbaptized. But he adds:—

> This opinion of mine concerning infants, I will not defend with contention or obstinacy, nor rashly condemn those, who being persuaded by *the authority of the ancients, and of almost the whole Church,* do allow salvation to those infants only, to whom God, in His secret but just judgment, does vouchsafe the sacrament of Regeneration and Baptism.

Our own Wickliffe says—

> When an infant of believers is brought to church, that according to Christ's rule he may be baptized, and the water or some other requisite is wanting, and, the people's pious intentions continuing, he dies in the mean time naturally by the will of God, *it seems hard to define positively the damnation of such an infant,* when neither the infant nor the people have sinned, that he should be damned. Where then is the merciful liberality of Christ?

But he goes on to say, with a timidity which shows how slowly even great men such as he recover themselves from the cramping effects of dogmas long enforced by Church authority—

> And by this I answer your third objection, granting that God, if He will, may damn such an infant, and do him no wrong, and, if He will, He can save him, and I dare not define either part. Nor am I careful about reputation or getting evidence in the case, but, as a dumb man, am silent, humbly confessing my ignorance, using conditional words, because it is not clear to me whether such an infant shall be saved or damned.

But we, brethren, will not hesitate to say, in the light of our Lord's Divine teaching, taught as we are ourselves by the Living Word, that God, our gracious God and Father, our faithful Creator, cannot 'will' to damn such an

infant,' because He cannot do it without 'doing him wrong.' Happily, our Church does not dogmatize upon this side of the question at all. The Prayer Book says that infants dying after Baptism 'before they commit actual sin, are undoubtedly saved.' It leaves the case of infants dying unbaptized as an open question, on which we may think as God shall help us to think: or rather it gathers this case also within the scope of that charitable Rubric, which stands at the end of the service for the Communion of the Sick, where we are told that—

> If a man . . . . *by any just impediment* do not receive the Sacrament of Christ's Body and Blood,—

yet at home, in his chamber, if his spirit be right, he may—

> eat and drink the Body and Blood of our Saviour Christ profitably to his soul's health, although he do not receive the Sacrament with his mouth.

If 'any just impediment' may be deemed sufficient to warrant the assurance that whatever blessings are coupled with *this* Sacrament will be received by one, who, as far as his circumstances permit, is in the fit state to receive them, then surely the same may be said in the case of a helpless infant, whom—not its own will—but the will or the necessities of others have debarred from the other sacrament of Baptism. In short, we may here apply, in a larger and more charitable sense than even the writer himself contemplated, the words of an old Archbishop (Hincmar) of Rheims, A.D.860. A certain rash and headstrong bishop of his province had excommunicated all his clergy, so that there was nobody to give baptism, absolution, or burial.

> The Archbishop writes a severe reproof to him, and in it takes occasion to speak of the fate of such infants, as had in the mean time died without Baptism,—hoping that by God's extraordinary mercy they might be saved, though he had done what lay in him for their perishing. He argues thus: 'As in the case of infants that are under the guilt of the sin of nature, that is, the *sins of others*, the *faith of others*, that is, of their godfathers that consent for them in baptism, is a means of their salvation, so also to those infants to whom you have caused Baptism to be denied, the faith and godly desire of their parents or godfathers,

> who in sincerity desired Baptism for them, but obtained it not, may be a help by the gift of Him, whose Spirit, which gives regeneration, breathes where it pleases.'

And so the Reformers generally, though they held with Augustine that the due punishment of Original Sin was, in strictness, damnation in hell-fire, yet allowed the pious charity of 'parents and godparents' to be of service to a child, who but for some accident *would have been* brought to Baptism.

But is it only the actual 'parents' according to the flesh, who would 'desire Baptism' for such little ones? Or is it only the '*parents*,' among all the relatives, whose love is to be considered? Are we not *all* kindred in the spirit—if not kindred in the flesh—with all the members of the great Human Family? Is not the longing desire, which fills our hearts for the ultimate happiness of every child of man,—which will not suffer us to believe that any one of our brethren can be doomed to never-ending, infinite, irremediable, woe,—is not this the voice of the Living Word Himself who speaks within us, the witness for Him who cares for us all, the assurance that His fatherly Love,—that Love of which our love to one another in all its different many-coloured forms is but the faint refraction—

> Broken lights, O Lord, of Thee—

will breathe when and where it pleases with life-giving power, in spite of all the dogmas of men?

And this is in truth the teaching of great authorities in the English Church. Thus Archbishop Laud says—

> Baptism is necessary to the salvation of infants, in the ordinary way of the Church, *without binding God to the use and means of that Sacrament*, to which He hath bound us:

and Archbishop Whitgift—

> I do mislike as much as you the opinion of those, that think infants to be condemned which are not baptized.

While Calvin ridicules the reasoning of 'the Sorbonne' or 'Theological Faculty of Paris,' whose words are as follows:—

> A difficult question is being stirred among the Doctors, whether an infant, in danger of dying, if water were not at hand, ought not to be thrown into a well [and so be *baptized* before dying], rather than be committed into God's hands while the event is awaited. This, however, would be a murder deserving to be punished with death, *unless* it should be said that baptism was necessary to salvation.

I have brought before you this array of names and authorities, chiefly that you may see what monstrous and often puerile propositions have been solemnly laid down by Fathers of the Church, Masters in Israel, Doctors and Divines of various ages from the beginning,—earnest and good men, doubtless,—some of them, great men of their different ages, and worthy of all respectful attention, but who lived in times which, compared with our own, were in many respects but as infancy and childhood, compared with the extended knowledge and matured reason of riper years. As has been well said, this age in which we live is really the eldest child of time, instead of the youngest, and ought to combine the wisdom and experience of all, and show the last results of human progress. How absurd, then, are all attempts to force as articles of faith upon the consciences of this generation the dicta of former ones, however highly we may think of the individual utterers of them for learning and piety, as saints or martyrs, and however we may trace in their lives and writings the guidance of that Holy Spirit, which is ever leading on the Church of God,—by ways to us, perhaps, perplexed, inexplicable, and obscure,—but onward still to clearer light, and larger views of the Character and Works, the Word and Will, of Him whom we adore!

X.

HOLY BAPTISM.

PREACHED ON SUNDAY EVENING, JAN. 7, 1866, IN THE CATHEDRAL, MARITZBURG.

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1 Cor. i. 17.

'FOR CHRIST SENT ME NOT TO BAPTIZE, BUT TO PREACH THE GOSPEL.

This morning I dwelt upon the fact that St Paul in this passage seems evidently to have considered the work of baptizing as inferior to that of preaching the Gospel. Instead of thanking God that he had baptized multitudes of the Corinthian Church, and so saved them from the pit of woe, he thanks God that he had baptized very few of them, lest the Gospel which he had preached should have been misunderstood. I pointed out the strange contrast between this language and this practice of St Paul and of our Lord, who appears never to have baptized himself any of his disciples, and the strong statements made upon this subject by very many of the ancient Fathers, who, being mostly unmarried men or monks, knew little by personal knowledge of the strength of family ties, knew nothing of the love of father and mother, and with a cool and callous indifference doomed the innocent infant just brought into the world, and dying unbaptized, to never-ending, infinite woe. The careless or profligate parent, by whose neglect the child may have died unbaptized, was capable of repentance—was capable of being admitted into the abode of the blessed: the poor little babe, who had never sinned at all, was consigned without doubt to the flames of hell-fire. I quoted several passages from the ancient Fathers to illustrate these views. But these are admirably summed up in

the following extract from one of the most interesting and important works of the present day* :—

'Be assured,' writes St Fulgentius, 'and doubt not, that not only men who have obtained the use of reason, but also little children who have begun to live in their mother's womb and have there died, or who, having been first born, have passed away from the world without the sacrament of Holy Baptism, administered in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, must be punished by the eternal torture of undying fire; for, although they have committed no sin by their own will, they have nevertheless drawn with them the condemnation of Original Sin, by their carnal conception and nativity.' It will be remembered that these saints,—while maintaining that infants, whose existence was but for a moment, descended into eternal fire on account of an apple that was eaten four thousand years before they were born,—maintained also that the creation and the death of those infants were the direct, personal, and uncontrolled acts of the Deity.

But the scope of the doctrine we are considering was not confined to unbaptized children; it extended also to all adults who were external to the Church. If the whole human race existed under a sentence of condemnation, which could only be removed by connection with Christianity, and if this sentence was so stringent, that even the infant was not exempt from its effects, it was natural that the adult heathen, who added his personal transgressions to the guilt of Adam, should be doomed at last to perdition. Nor did the Fathers, who constructed the early systems of theology, at all shrink from this consequence. At a time when the Christian Church formed but an infinitesimal portion of the community,—at a time when almost all the members who composed it were themselves converts from paganism, and reckoned among the pagans those who were bound to them by the closest ties of gratitude and affection,—the great majority of the Fathers deliberately taught that the entire pagan world was doomed to that state of punishment, which

* Lecky's *Rise and Influence of Rationalism in Europe*, I. 397—414.

they invariably described as literal and undying fire. In any age, and under any circumstance, such a doctrine must seem inexpressibly shocking. But it appears most peculiarly so when we consider that the convert who accepted it, and who with a view to his own felicity proclaimed the system, of which he believed it to form a part, to be a message of good tidings, must have acquiesced in the eternal perdition of the mother who had borne him, of the father upon whose knees he had played, of the friends who were associated with the happy years of childhood and early manhood, of the immense mass of his fellow-countrymen, and of all those heroes and sages, who by their lives or precepts had first kindled a moral enthusiasm within his breast. All these were doomed by one sweeping sentence. Nor were they alone in their condemnation. The heretics, no matter how trivial may have been their error, were reserved for the same fearful fate.

The Church, according to the favourite image of the Fathers, was a solitary ark floating upon a boundless sea of ruin. Within its pale there was salvation: without it salvation was impossible. 'If any one out of Noah's Ark could escape the deluge,' wrote St Cyprian, 'he who is out of the Church may also escape.' 'Without this house,' said Origen, 'that is, without the Church, no one is saved.' 'No one,' said St Augustine, 'cometh to salvation and eternal life except he who hath Christ for his head; but no one can have Christ for his head except he that is in his body the Church.' 'Hold most firmly,' added St Fulgentius, 'and doubt not, that not only all pagans, but also all Jews, heretics, and schismatics, who depart from the present life outside the Catholic Church, are about to go into eternal fire, prepared for the Devil and his angels.' So prominent and so unquestionable was this doctrine deemed, that the Council of Carthage in the Fourth Century made it one of the test questions put to every bishop before ordination.

But we stand in a very different position to those ancient Fathers. We live in a different age, when God, our Hea-

venly Father, by the revelations which He has made of Himself in the results of modern scientific research, has cleared up much to us which was very dark and obscure to them.

We know now, for instance, as the sure result of Biblical Criticism, that the narratives of the Creation and the Fall, which are recorded in the first chapters of Genesis, cannot be regarded as historically true. And this conclusion is of the utmost importance at the present time, when geological researches have also shown us as plainly that the true history of the world's formation is very different indeed from that which is stated in these chapters,—that the *age* of man's first appearance in the world dates immensely beyond the era which the writers in the Bible assign to it, and that the progress of our race has most probably been gradual, through a succession of countless ages, from a low state of savage barbarism to our present high civilisation. It is a very great relief to thoughtful inquiring minds to be able to feel that it is no longer necessary to strain our ingenuity in painful efforts to reconcile the Scriptural account of the Creation with the facts of Science,—that we may lay aside the Scriptural account altogether—we *must* lay it aside—as an historical narrative; for it contradicts itself in various points; and, in fact, the *second* account of the Creation, contained in the second and third chapters of Genesis, is the work of quite a different writer from him who composed the *first* account, which we find in the first chapter and the first three verses of the second,—the work of one who writes in a very different style, and from a very different point of view.

But then this knowledge, which we now possess, was utterly unknown to those ancient Fathers. They had nothing but the Bible to guide them,—no facts from the outer world to strengthen and support that revulsion of feeling, which (as we saw this morning) they sometimes felt, as men, against the sternness of some Church-dogmas, while yet they deemed it necessary to enforce them. And it is plain that it must greatly modify our views upon some points, on which they, with all their natural repugnance, found it yet not difficult to dogmatize.

And this is true, in some measure, not of the ancient Fathers only, but of the framers of our own Articles, three

centuries ago. In that age there was nothing to prevent men saying, as in the 9th Article, that 'Original Sin' is 'the fault and corruption of the nature of every man, that naturally *is engendered of the offspring of Adam*,' or speaking, as in the 10th Article, of 'the condition of Man *after the Fall of Adam*.' Happily, the new Form of subscription, which has just been passed into Law for the Clergy of the Church of England, relieves us considerably as regards such expressions. We are now only required to express our approval of the *doctrine*, generally, of the Church of England, as contained in the Liturgy and the Articles,—not of the *doctrines*, that is, of *each particular doctrine*, of *all and everything* contained in them. This is no mere technical refinement, or legal quibble, for escaping out of a difficulty. It is a real and vital distinction, which was *intended* to be made when the form in question was drawn up,—a fact, which was stated in the most plain and public manner in his place in Parliament, by one of the gentlemen who sat on the Commission which framed it, nor was the statement contradicted or modified in any way—as it certainly would have been if not correct—by any member of the Lower or Upper House of Parliament, who sat upon the same Commission. Not only therefore *legally* would a clergyman be justified in rejecting any particular proposition—such as this, that 'Original Sin' arises from the descent of all mankind from Adam, and is a consequence of Adam's Fall, according to the letter of the description in Genesis—but *morally* also he would be justified, if he has made the Subscription in the sense in which he knew it was expressly meant to be taken, and with a clear conscience declared his adherence to the *general doctrine* which pervades the formularies, to the truth which underlies their particular forms of expression, and gives a life and meaning to their utterances.

I need hardly say that the same principle may be applied to those parts of the Baptismal Service, in which reference is made to the Scripture statements of Noah and his family being saved in the Ark, or the children of Israel being led through the Red Sea,—statements which, no doubt, were believed to be historically true three hundred years ago, when these prayers were authorised, and in the yet older time when they were written, but which are now shown by

the researches of Modern Criticism, as well by those of other sciences, to be certainly no records of historical fact. Yet we can use these words still for the present,—until, as I trust, our Liturgy shall be amended by the authority of Parliament,—as symbolical expressions of the spiritual life. As such they are still to us inspired and sanctified, as having been the language, endeared, as figurative language for the expression of facts lying deep in man's consciousness, to spiritual minds through many ages. And you will remember that it has now been ruled in the Court of Arches that the words in the Ordination Service, 'I do *unfeignedly believe* all the Canonical Scriptures,' must be understood to mean simply 'the expression of a *bonâ fide* belief' that 'the Holy Scriptures *contain everything necessary to salvation*,' and that '*to that extent* they have the direct sanction of the Almighty.' If this is true of the Scriptures themselves, of course it must be true of the Creeds, which are repeated in our Services, the compositions of fallible men of former days, which are only *based on* Scripture. In other words, we are justified by this high authority, in these days of wider knowledge and deeper thought, in extending to the answer of the godparents in Baptism, who say of what is called the Apostles' Creed (though, as we all know, *written* long after the age of the Apostles), 'All this I steadfastly believe,' the same latitude of interpretation as that which is extended to the declaration of the Deacon at Ordination, when he says of the Scriptures themselves, 'All this I unfeignedly believe.' We may understand the answer in question to express no more than the belief that the Creeds '*contain everything necessary to salvation*,' and that '*to that extent* they have the direct sanction of the Almighty.' Yet we believe also—at least I certainly do—that there are great eternal truths underlying most, if not all, the mere literal expressions of the Creeds—that, for instance, Christ will 'come from Heaven' in a very living sense 'to judge both the quick and dead,' though we can no longer believe that Heaven is a place above our heads, or that he literally '*sitteth* on the *right-hand* of God.'

In like manner we all know well enough what real facts of man's consciousness underlie the expressions of the old Fathers, when they talked about 'Original Sin.' It matters not for practical purposes whether it sprang from Adam and

Adam's Fall, or not. We are only too painfully conscious, each in himself, that we are 'very far gone' from perfect righteousness,—that we are prone of ourselves to evil,—that 'the flesh'—that is, the fleshly appetite—'lusteth within us contrary to the Spirit,'—that we need continually Divine Strength and Help, in order that we may live as the children of God—we need the grace of God 'preventing us, that we may have a good will, and working with us, when we have that good will.' And Baptism is a sign to remind us that that Grace—that Fatherly Love—will not be withheld from any son of man that needs it. The Church is as a Light set upon a hill, not to increase or display the darkness of the rest of the world, but to throw a cheerful light on all around, upon those who wander in the gloomy paths of ignorance and heathenism, feeling, if haply they may find, the Living God. And each baptized Christian is a witness of God's Love to all his brethren. Some have spoken, indeed, of leaving those without the Church, *their* Church, to the 'uncovenanted mercies of God.' Uncovenanted mercies of God! we know not any. He has made a gracious Covenant with us in giving us any reason at all to rejoice in His Providential Care, to hope in His Mercy, to trust in His Love. The True and Just One will not disappoint the expectations which He has Himself awakened. While the Earth remaineth and living men are brought into being upon it,—while 'seed-time and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night,' recur without ceasing,—while the Sun rules for us the day, and the Moon the night,—by the Light which He sheds upon us, by the Food which He provides for us, by the Life which He has given us, by the Spirit which witnesses daily with the spirit of each one of us, that we are in very deed the children of God,—by all this outpouring of His Goodness,—our Faithful Creator, I repeat, *has* made a covenant with us, an Everlasting Covenant of Love which can never be broken. 'The gifts and calling of God are without repentance.'

We do not then make light of Christian Baptism. Far from it. We do not, indeed, with the Jesuit Missionaries, or even with some of our own Church in the present day, make it a matter of eternal life and death to baptize a child. We do not think it necessary to run hither and thither,

baptizing stray children or uninstructed adults in heathen lands, as if the mere act of sprinkling them with water in the Holy Name would work a mighty charm upon them, and convert them in a moment, by a stupendous change, from children of the devil into children of God. Surely, if such were the case, it would not be very difficult to go a little further than the Parisian Doctors, of whom I spoke this morning, and say that, in all consistency, the new baptized should be put then and there to death, to save them from the danger of falling back to their native habits again, and ensure them a blessed life in the other world. Nor do we think it right, with certain modern teachers, to enforce religious duties by the help of artificial terrors, to threaten parents that their babes, if unbaptized, will not be buried in consecrated ground, or to indoctrinate young children with the notion that a white angel follows the steps of the baptized, and a black demon haunts the unbaptized. Such conduct, indeed, may be redeemed from the domain of the ludicrous by a regard for the sincere religious convictions, of which it may often be the exponent. But there is always a root at the bottom of such practices, a dogma which appears in various forms, but of which this is the essence,—the notion which links Divine Grace and the communication of God's Spirit to anything but *the living soul*, to which it comes according to its capacity of receiving it,—the notion which confines the Love of God to any family, to any caste, or to the professors of any Creed.

Surely, if Baptism had been, as some would deem it, the very gate of Paradise, we should have heard more about it from the lips of Jesus; we should have heard him tell the parents of the little ones, whom he took in his arms and blessed, that they must first be brought to be *baptized*, before they could enter the Kingdom. Yet it is plain that He admitted his followers into his flock by baptism—though 'Jesus himself baptized not, but his disciples': and the command in Matt.xxviii.19, 'Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost,' would be conclusive as to the fact of his having directly enjoined the practice, were it not that this formula, with its full expression of the Name of the Trinity, betrays the later age in which the passage in which it occurs was most probably written.

For in the Acts of the Apostles, we read repeatedly of persons being baptized 'in the name of Jesus Christ,' ii.38, 'in the name of the Lord Jesus,' viii.16, 'in the name of the Lord,' x.48, 'into the name of the Lord Jesus,' xix.9; and so we find,—

> 'Arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling upon the name of the Lord,' xxii.16.

In the Epistles, again, we read of being baptized 'into Christ Jesus,' being baptized 'into Christ's death,' Rom.vi. 3, being baptized 'into Christ,' Gal.iii.27. But we never find any reference whatever to the formula, 'in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost,' which would be strange, if these words had been expressly laid down by Christ himself, as the form to be always used in Baptism. And in fact this clear enunciation of the doctrine of the 'Trinity in Unity' belongs, as is well known, to a later age than that of the Apostles.

But the above passages are sufficient to show that baptism was practised from the first, by Christ's direction, as the initiatory rite, by which believers were to be admitted into the company of his disciples. They were baptized 'into him' or 'into his name,' as their Master and Lord, their Guide and Teacher in the way of Eternal Life: and so St Paul speaks of the Jews of old as having been baptized into Moses, and thanks God, as we have heard this morning, in the words just before the text, that he had baptized none but Crispus and Gaius, 'lest any should say that I had baptized into mine own name.' John the Baptist, as we know, had already adopted the practice of baptizing his disciples; but he had borrowed it from the custom of the Jews before his time, who used always to baptize their proselytes—to 'baptize them into Moses'—as well as circumcise them. Thus a Jewish author writes:—

> And so in all ages, when a Gentile is willing to enter into the covenant, and gather himself under the wings of the Majesty of God, and take upon him the yoke of the Law, he must be circumcised, and baptized, and bring a sacrifice, or, if it be a woman, be baptized and bring a sacrifice. . . . . A stranger that is circumcised and not baptized, or baptized and not circumcised, he is not a proselyte, till he be both circumcised and bap-

tized; and he must be baptized in the presence of three.

From the practice, then, of the Jews of that age, and from the example of John, our Lord appears to have adopted this rite, as the ceremony for admitting disciples into his Church. And we, if we profess to be his followers, are bound to bring our children to Holy Baptism—to be 'signed with the sign of his Cross,'—

> in token that hereafter they shall not be ashamed to confess the faith of Christ crucified, and manfully to fight under his banner against sin, the world, and the devil, and to continue Christ's faithful soldiers and servants unto their lives' end.

Not that in that moment they are first made recipients of the grace of God, or that the inward regeneration of the Spirit is for a moment to be confounded with the outward rite—the sprinkling with water—which is only the 'sign' of it—by which, in outward form, we are, as the Prayer Book Service says, 'regenerate and grafted into the body of Christ's Church,'—by which 'the promises of the forgiveness of sin, and of our adoption to be the sons of God' are, as the Article says,—not first made to us, but —'visibly signed and sealed,'—by which 'Faith' and 'Grace' are—not first given to the recipient, but—Faith, where it exists already, is '*confirmed*,' and Grace '*increased*,' 'by virtue of prayer to God.'

Our bringing infants, then, to Baptism, as we did last Sunday, is a beautiful symbol of our faith, that they are already in fact—yes, from their very birth-hour—the children of God. And in this way Infant Baptism in our Church is a protest, for which we may be thankful, against all exclusiveness, against all appropriation of the Love of God by any. The Church declares by it that no merit—not even Faith—is needful to make a human soul the object of the love and care of the Father of spirits. Not that Faith is not the inheritance of every human soul, descending to it from that Heavenly Parent: not that Virtue is not the end, the perfection, which that Heavenly Parent intends for it, and through joy or sorrow, by pleasure or suffering, by human teachers, by Church ordinances, seeks to bring forth and cultivate, as that precious

thing which not even Omnipotence Itself can *create*, which Infinite Love and Infinite Wisdom can only combine to aid. 'Why *will* ye die, O House of Israel?'

No! brethren, we must not deceive ourselves. We must repent, that is, put away, turn away from, struggle against, every evil habit and practice; for a mere religion of sentiment, still more a mere religion of outward forms, will profit us nothing. 'Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel.' But the preaching of repentance is an essential part of the preaching of the Gospel. 'Repent, and believe the Gospel.' And this is the Gospel, the good news, which Paul declared to his Corinthian converts, that—

> 'God was in Christ reconciling [not a few—but] the *world* unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them.'

The good news of that kingdom, which apostolic men were commissioned of old—which God's messengers are still commissioned—to preach to their brethren, is not only that the kingdom of God is set up among men,—that kingdom which consists not in abstaining from meat and drink, or any other outward ordinances, but in 'righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost,'—but that each one of us, however simple and ignorant, however weak and sinful, yes, however far fallen, however much depraved, is called to take up his birthright as a living man, and enter into it. Is it not strange that any who have any real insight into the mysteries of that kingdom, into those things of the heart which God sees, but with which a stranger doth not intermeddle,—who know something of the heavy burden of guilt, the grievousness of feeling separate from God and from Goodness, the bitterness of self-loathing, the despair of self-help,—who have tasted the healing cordials which the words of Jesus supply for all those soul-sicknesses,—who have known something of the spiritual blessings, which fill and crown the life of one who walks with God,—is it not strange, I say, that any, with experience like this, should look upon a mere outward rite such as Baptism, as the condition—yes, the indispensable condition!—of such a life, the key to those treasures of pardon and grace?

It would seem as if, in this 19th century, and amongst

Protestant Englishmen, it were a fight with shadows, a mere slaying of the slain, to enlarge on this and kindred subjects, if we did not *know*—from report, from observation, from the religious press, from personal intercourse—that the old superstitions of Rome are trying to creep back at these points, on this sacrament and on the other, into the Church of England.

But no! it shall never be. As one has nobly written (Lecky, I.p.205)—

> The spirit of the Fathers has incontestably faded. The days of Athanasius and Augustine have passed away, never to return. The whole course and tendency of thought is flowing in another direction. The controversies of bygone centuries ring with strange hollowness on the ear. But, if, turning from ecclesiastical historians, we apply the exclusively *moral* tests, which the New Testament so invariably and so emphatically enforces,—if we ask whether Christianity has ceased to produce the living fruits of love and charity and zeal for truth,—the conclusion we should arrive at would be very different. If it be true Christianity, to dive with a passionate charity into the darkest recesses of misery and vice, to irrigate every quarter of the earth with the fertilizing stream of an almost boundless benevolence, and to include all the sections of humanity in the circle of an intense and efficacious sympathy,—if it be true Christianity, to destroy or weaken the barriers which had separated class from class and nation from nation, to free war from its harshest elements, and to make a consciousness of essential equality and of a genuine fraternity dominate over all accidental differences,—if it be, above all, true Christianity, to cultivate a love of truth for its own sake, a spirit of candour and of tolerance towards those with whom we differ,—if these be the marks of a true and healthy Christianity, then never since the days of the Apostles has it been so vigorous as at present; *and the decline of dogmatic systems and of clerical influence has been a measure, if not a cause, of its advance.*

XI.

SIGNS AND WONDERS.

PREACHED ON SUNDAY MORNING, JAN. 14, 1866, IN THE CATHEDRAL, MARITZBURG.

MATT. XII. 38, 39, 41, 42.

'THEN CERTAIN OF THE SCRIBES AND OF THE PHARISEES ANSWERED, SAYING, MASTER, WE WOULD SEE A SIGN FROM THEE. BUT HE ANSWERED AND SAID UNTO THEM, AN EVIL AND ADULTEROUS GENERATION SEEKETH AFTER A SIGN; AND THERE SHALL NO SIGN BE GIVEN TO IT, BUT THE SIGN OF THE PROPHET JONAS . . . . THE MEN OF NINEVEH SHALL RISE UP IN THE JUDGMENT WITH THIS GENERATION, AND SHALL CONDEMN IT; BECAUSE THEY REPENTED AT THE PREACHING OF JONAS, AND BEHOLD! A GREATER THAN JONAS IS HERE. THE QUEEN OF THE SOUTH SHALL ARISE IN THE JUDGMENT WITH THIS GENERATION, AND SHALL CONDEMN IT; FOR SHE CAME FROM THE UTTERMOST PARTS OF THE EARTH TO HEAR THE WISDOM OF SOLOMON, AND BEHOLD! A GREATER THAN SOLOMON IS HERE.'

THESE words have been read already in your hearing, as part of the second Lesson for this morning's Service. And you may remember that in this chapter of St Matthew's Gospel, as it now stands, there is a verse given, as part of our Lord's reply to the demand of the Pharisees, which I have not included in my text:—

> 'For, as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly, so shall the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.'

I have not quoted this verse as a portion of my text, because I have little doubt that it formed no part of our Lord's original answer,—that it is merely a gloss or note of a later age, an attempt to explain the meaning of

Christ's words, and the bearing of his arguments, by one who did not realize fully the deep meaning of his teaching, or feel the connection and force of his reasoning.

In Matt.xvi.4, we have recorded the very same expression from the lips of Jesus, in reply to a similar request :—

> The Pharisees also with the Sadducees came, and tempting desired him that he would show them a sign from heaven. He answered and said unto them, When it is evening, ye say, 'It will be fair weather, for the sky is red'; and in the morning, 'It will be foul weather to-day, for the sky is red and lowering.' Ye hypocrites! ye can discern the face of the sky: but can ye not discern the signs of the times? A wicked and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given unto it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas. And he left them and departed.'

You will perceive that there is nothing said here about Jonah living in the whale's belly, or about our Lord being three days and nights 'in the heart of the earth.' In Mark viii.11,12, we have a similar account, and we are told that Jesus—

> 'sighed deeply in his spirit, and said, Why doth this generation seek after a sign? Verily, I say unto you, there shall no sign be given to this generation.'

Here there is no mention of Jonah at all. In Luke xi. 29,30, we read—

> 'And when the people were gathered thick together, he began to say, This is an evil generation: they seek a sign: and there shall no sign be given it, but the sign of Jonas the prophet. For, as Jonas was a sign unto the Ninevites, so shall also the Son of Man be to this generation.'

Here, again, no mention whatever is made of the 'whale' or of our Lord's burial.

It may be said, of course, that the omission in these instances of any distinct reference to these points does not by itself suffice to prove that the verse in question, which we find in St Matthew, is really a later gloss upon our Lord's original words: though they may tend to suggest that this is the case, more especially as we know that some unwarrantable insertions have been made in a later day in

various parts of the Old and New Testaments. But there are other points to be noticed which seem to prove this conclusively.

In the first place, this verse evidently interrupts the course of the argument, which is continued by our Lord himself in the next two verses, as you doubtless felt when I read the text:—

> 'An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given to it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas. The men of Nineveh shall rise up in the judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it; because they repented at the preaching of Jonas, and behold! a greater than Jonas is here. The queen of the south shall arise in the judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it; for she came from the uttermost parts of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon, and behold! a greater than Solomon is here.'

Here, it is plain, our Lord himself indicates in what sense 'the sign of the prophet Jonas' was given to them. Let them consider the story of Jonah, as they read it in their own Scriptures. He wrought no miracles—he needed none—to enforce his message: he spoke the word of God, and that was enough for the Ninevites; he did but preach to them, and they repented. But 'a greater than Jonas was here': and his preaching fell unheeded, the Divine Power of his words was not felt by the stubborn heart of this 'evil generation.' Their heart was 'adulterous' as well as 'evil': they did not love, with a pure, sincere love, the Truth of the Living God which he proclaimed to them; they did not love the Truth for the Truth's sake; they did not receive it as God's own Word, dutifully and joyfully, as the Husband of the soul, the Lord of their inner being. They must still be asking for some external 'sign,' to show that he was a 'Teacher come from God'; they must still be crying out for miracles and prodigies, as the only sure credentials of his mission.

This is evidently the true explanation of our Lord's argument in the words of the text. And precisely in this way does St Luke, in the parallel passage, xi.32, explain the sense in which, 'as Jonas was a sign to the Ninevites, so the Son of Man should be to that generation.'

And, in fact, Jonah's being in the belly of the fish, supposing even for a moment this narrative to be historically true,—as few educated persons, I imagine, in the present day would seriously believe it to be,—could have been no sign at all to the *Ninevites*, whatever it might have been to Jonah himself. The Ninevites were not present on the occasion of Jonah's being swallowed, or his being vomited up on the dry land. The ship in which he took his passage was bound to Tarshish on the coast of Spain, and he was thrown up, therefore, according to the story, somewhere upon the shores of the Mediterranean, far away from Nineveh. It was Jonah's presence in the streets of that great city, witnessing against the sins of its people, and warning them in Jehovah's name—'yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown,'—it was *this* which was a sign to them, to show that God was gracious and merciful to them, as well as holy, just, and righteous, 'not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance,'—a sign that God Himself had visited them, that God Himself had sent His messenger among them, that God Himself was speaking to them by His lips. And so, to the Jews of our Saviour's time, the presence among them of one who 'spake as never man spake,' uttering God's words, witnessing for God's Love and Truth among them, should have been a 'sign' of God's gracious purpose towards them,—they should have 'known the time of their visitation.'

Nor, again, was the fact of the body of Jesus lying 'three days and nights'—or, rather, as the Gospels record, one day and two nights—in the heart of the earth, a 'sign' to the Pharisees and Sadducees,—to the unbelieving Jews,—to that 'evil and adulterous generation': for the Jews did not see him after his burial, nor did they believe at all in his resurrection.

Nor, lastly, can we suppose that our Lord in this very passage, while condemning his questioners for seeking a miraculous sign as a ground of their faith, would actually in the same moment give them such a sign, in direct compliance with their own request.

On all these accounts, it can scarcely be doubted that the verse of which I am speaking is no part of the original language of Jesus, but a mere interpretation of the sup-

posed meaning of his words, a forced and unnatural interpretation, arising from a mind incapable of seizing the deep sense of the true answer given by our Lord. I do not mean that it is necessarily an insertion, made by some *later* writer in the original Gospel, as it came from the hands of its compiler: it may be due to that compiler himself. And it may be right here to mention that what we call 'the Gospel of St Matthew,' though based probably upon some record of St Matthew's teaching, was certainly not written by the Apostle himself. On this point I will quote the words of Dean Alford:—

> That the Apostle himself drew up the Gospel *in its present form*, both external and internal evidence forbid us supposing. For the weight of external evidence is conclusive that the Apostle wrote his Gospel in *Hebrew*, that is, in Syro-Chaldaic, the vernacular language of Palestine at the time. And from internal features of narration and arrangement, especially in the latter part of the Gospel, it is hardly possible that it can have proceeded *directly* from an Apostle and Eyewitness. We are led then to the inference, that *we owe our present Gospel to a translator and compiler, similar in character, and in the nature of his labours, to those who have delivered to us the other two Gospels* [that is, the second and third Gospels, those of Mark and Luke]. *Who this was we are totally unable to say*, and conjectures would be labour in vain.
> A question then may arise, *What was* the Gospel, which Matthew wrote in Hebrew? And, though there may be some difficulty in ascertaining this minutely and exactly, yet, in the main, there can be little doubt that it consisted of various large sections of the Lord's life and sayings, rather after the manner of memoirs, than of any consecutive history,—that we owe to it the masterly and perfect report of the longer discourses, for instance, the Sermon on the Mount, the discourse concerning John, ch.ix, &c., and the independent narration of a variety of incidents, not contained in the other Gospels. But the arrangement of the matter, and much supplementary and intercalary narrative, I believe to be owing to the re-

searches of our Evangelistic compiler, who was desirous, as far as in him lay, to present to his readers a continuous and unbroken history.

I cannot, however, subscribe to the opinion, that the translation and compilation was made under the superintendence of the Apostle himself.

Such are the words of the Dean of Canterbury, whose book is a standard work of the present day, and largely studied by candidates for Ordination. It is plain from this statement that, in the translation of his primary document, and the insertion of his 'supplementary and intercalary matter,' by this unknown 'compiler,' who wrote considerably after our Lord's own time, there was abundant opportunity given for introducing such a verse as that which we are now considering,—as well as other parts of the present narrative, which apparently rest upon traditions, as to the sayings and doings of Jesus, that for many years had been passing from mouth to mouth among the early Christians. It must be indeed an extravagant theory, and one perilous to the cause of Christianity itself, to maintain that every such record of traditionary reminiscences must be regarded as absolutely and infallibly true,—that 'all our hopes would be taken from us' for time and for eternity,—'all our nearest and dearest consolations,'—if it could be shown that any one line of these statements is untrustworthy and untrue. Nor could such an assertion be made by any one, who has a scholar-like acquaintance with the facts of the case, without shutting for a moment his eyes to those facts, and simply ignoring them.

Dean Alford, indeed, thinks that wherever this unknown compiler—

could not, *satisfactorily to himself,* ascertain what was the Apostle's testimony, he has not supplied the narrative from other sources, but has *omitted the fact.*

But this is only an opinion, which is not supported by any proof, and from which we may be allowed to differ.

For that such 'traditions' of our Lord's words and deeds, not recorded in the Gospels, did abound in the early days of Christianity, and were circulated in common talk among believers, long after the time of the Apostles, we have abundant evidence to show. Thus St Paul, we

remember, quotes one saying of Christ, which does not appear in either of the Gospel narratives—

> 'Remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'

But so, too, Justin Martyr, nearly a century afterwards, has recorded two sayings of Christ, not found in the Gospels. Thus in one place he writes,—

> Our Lord Jesus Christ said, 'In whatsoever I may find you, in this will I also judge you.'

And again he observes—

> Christ says, 'There shall be schisms and heresies.'

So also in the 'Epistle of Barnabas,'—undoubtedly a very ancient document, by whomsoever written, and for some centuries held in great reverence in the Church,—we find these words ascribed to Christ:—

> 'Those who wish to see me and to lay hold of my kingdom must be contrite and suffering, and so receive me.'

Papias, again, was one of the most ancient of the Fathers, who lived very near to the apostolic times; and though he tells us indeed, as Eusebius informs us, that 'he was by no means himself a hearer and witness of the holy Apostles,' yet he declares that he 'received the things of the faith from those who were personally known to the Apostles.' He wrote, it appears, in his old age, and these are his actual words:—

> I will not hesitate to set down in writing to you whatever things I formerly well learnt from the Elders and well remembered, maintaining the truth about them. For I did not take pleasure, like most men, in those who spoke the most, but in those who taught the truth, —not in those who quoted the commands of others, but those who delivered the commands given by our Lord in the faith, and springing out of the truth. But, if by chance any one came, who had followed the Elders, I examined the words of the Elders. What said Andrew, or Peter, or Philip, or Thomas, or James, or what John, or Matthew, or any other of the Lord's disciples? as, for instance, what said Aristion and the

> Elder John, the Lord's disciples—[the *Elder* or *Presbyter* John, as distinct from the *Apostle* John, already mentioned]. For I did not consider that what came out of books would benefit me so much as what came from the living and abiding voice.

Unfortunately, the 'living voice' it is, as we all know by experience, which, in a very short space of time,—much more in the lapse of more than a century since our Lord lived on earth,—comes to modify facts and multiply prodigies. These, for instance, are some of the statements which this writer makes on the authority of these 'Elders,' who had known the Apostles of Christ.

> Judas walked in this world a great example of impiety. For, being swelled so much in the flesh, that he could not pass through, where a cart passed through easily, he was crushed by the cart, so that his bowels gushed out.

I need hardly observe that this account of the death of Judas differs from that which is recorded in Matt.xxvii.5, where we read that Judas 'went and hanged himself,' as well as from Acts i.18, where we are told that 'falling headlong, he burst asunder in the midst, and all his bowels gushed out.' This last might, perhaps, be 'reconciled' with the statement of Papias: but that in the Gospel cannot possibly be. And yet this ancient Bishop mentions the fact without any compunction. It is plain that either he had not seen the Gospel, though writing more than a hundred years after the time of our Lord, or, if he had seen it, did not shrink from contradicting its statement, did not regard its account as infallibly true.

But again Papias gives this strange report of one of our Lord's discourses, on the authority of these same 'Elders,' who had personal knowledge of St John the Apostle of Christ.

> The Elders, who saw John the disciple of our Lord, have recorded that they heard from him, according as the Lord taught about those times, saying,—'The days shall come, in which vineyards shall grow, each having ten thousand branches, and in one branch ten thousand arms, and in one arm ten thousand twigs, and on each twig ten thousand clusters, and in each

cluster ten thousand grapes, and each grape when squeezed shall give twenty-five measures of wine. And, when any one of the saints shall lay hold of a cluster, another shall cry out, 'I am a better cluster; take me; through me bless the Lord.' In the same way also [he said] that a grain of wheat shall produce ten thousand ears, and each ear shall have ten thousand grains, and each grain five two-pound measures of clean flour, and other fruits and seeds and herbs, according to the fittingness which belongs to them,—and that all the animals, which use those kinds of food that are received from the earth, should become peaceful and docile, being subject to men in all subjection. These things, however, are credible to believers. But when Judas the traitor did not believe, and asked, 'But how shall such productions be brought to pass by the Lord?' the Lord said, 'They shall see, who shall come among them?'

And Eusebius, who quotes these passages, adds:—

Other things also hath the same Papias set forth, as having come to him by *unwritten tradition*, both some strange parables of our Saviour, and some teachings of his, and some other things rather fabulous. Among which also he says that there will be a *millennium*—a thousand years—after the resurrection from the dead, when Christ will reign bodily upon the earth. This idea I suppose he formed from having received the apostolical descriptions, not understanding the things which were said by them mystically in their representations. For he appears to have been a man of very small mind, to judge by his words. Yet he was the cause that most of the Church writers who came after him adopted the same opinion with himself, alleging the antiquity of the man,—as for instance Irenæus, and whoever else put forth the same opinions . . . . But in his own writings he delivers also other descriptions of our Lord's sayings, which he got from Aristion already mentioned and traditions of John the *Elder*.

Once more, in the famous Greek manuscript of the Gospels and Acts, which is called the Codex Bezæ, from having been presented by the Reformer Beza to the University of Cambridge,—one of the most important docu-

ments now in existence for settling the text of the New Testament,—and in the Latin translation made from it, we have several remarkable insertions, evidently derived from traditionary sources, such as the following. In Luke vi.6 we find—

> 'On the same day, having beheld a certain person working on the Sabbath, he said to him, 'Man, if thou knowest what thou doest, happy art thou: but, if thou knowest not, thou art accursed and a transgressor of the Law.'

So again in Matt.xx.28—

> 'But seek you out of little to increase, and out of greater to become less.'

And, generally, Dean Alford says of this manuscript:—

> Its peculiarities are so great, that *in many passages*, while the sense remains for the most part unaltered, *hardly three words together are the same as in the commonly received text.*

And this is the manuscript, with reference to which one of the highest authorities upon this subject in the present day* observes—

> It seems to me to represent in important features a text of the Gospels, if not *the most pure*, yet the most widely current in the middle, or at least towards the close, of the second century.

With such facts as these before us, how utterly untenable —how dangerous—is the doctrine, which has been laid down not long ago in this very Church!—

> The Church regards, and expects all its officers to regard, the Holy Scriptures as teaching *pure and simple truth*: it is nothing to reply that they teach what is true in all things necessary to salvation.
>
> We must commence by assuming something. We need assume for our purpose *no more* than that *the facts recorded in the New Testament are facts,—that the things were done, and the words were spoken, which are there declared to have been done and spoken.*

* *Westcott on the Canon of the New Testament*, p.176.

What things? What words? Those 'declared' in this this ancient manuscript 'to have been done and spoken'? Or those 'declared' in our modern English translation, which differs from the manuscript in a thousand places, and which, though accurate enough for all ordinary purposes, is known by all scholars not to be based upon any sufficient critical authority,—sufficient, I mean, to enable us to decide upon such a momentous question as this,—What *are* the original words, which 'the Church regards as pure and simple truth,' without the least possible admixture of error?

But the words before us in the text, repeated as they are, either literally or in substance, in so many places, have all the appearance of being one of our Lord's most genuine utterances.

> 'An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given to it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas.'

And from these words we may derive two deep and most instructive lessons.

(i) Our Lord here teaches us that the true heart of a sincere and humble-minded believer will not require or even desire to see a miracle, as the credentials of a Divine authority: it is only an 'evil and adulterous generation' that 'seeketh after a sign.'

I need not tell you that not only in the first age of Christianity do we find recorded very numerous instances of miraculous interference with the ordinary laws, which the Divine Being has established in the Natural World; but from that time to this there have never been wanting those who have appealed to miracles,—I do not mean to the 'mighty works' of Jesus or his disciples only, but to the miracles believed to have been wrought in his name in all ages,—as the surest evidence of the truth of Christianity. And it is this very spirit which our Lord condemns in the text. He says it is only an 'evil and adulterous generation' that seeks after 'signs.'

We know that 'adultery,' or any breach of the seventh Commandment, was a common figure for 'idolatry' under the old dispensation. The people of Israel, the people of Jehovah, were constantly reproached with seeking after the idols of the nations around them, as after lovers, and

departing thereby from the Living God,—who also, by a bold anthropomorphism, which was as yet pregnant with truth, was represented in the language of the prophets as 'a Jealous God.' There are some who resent these expressions, as tending to unworthy thoughts of the Great Father of the Universe, whose Name is Love: and doubtless they have been abused and misunderstood, so as not unfrequently to have had that effect. But we cannot on that account afford to lose the very precious lesson which they contain. He, who made the spirit and heart of man for the Highest Good, even the knowledge and love of Himself, will be 'jealous' of his affections being given elsewhere, will not leave him to rest—will not leave him, rather, to fail of his glorious destiny, by resting—in the love and worship of the creature, in the satisfaction of his own lower nature. Listen to the beautiful lines of George Herbert.

When God at first made man,
  Having a cup of blessing standing by,
Let us, said He, pour on him all we can;
  Let the world's riches, which dispersed lie,
Contract into a span.

So Strength first made a way;
  Then Beauty flowed, then Riches, Honour, Pleasure;
When almost all was out, God made a stay,
  Perceiving that, alone of all His Treasure,
Rest in the bottom lay.

For if I should, said He,
  Bestow this Jewel also on my creature,
He would adore my gifts instead of Me,
  And rest in Nature, not the God of Nature;
So both should losers be.

Yet let him keep the rest,—
  But keep it in repining restlessness:
Let him be rich—and weary; that, at least,
  If Goodness lead him not, yet weariness
May toss him to My Breast.

To 'seek for a sign' is to look for something in the *outward* world, something of which our *senses* may testify, as a reason for our belief, a witness to the Presence of God with us. The majestic order of the Universe testifies indeed to the thoughtful and reasoning mind of the Pre-

sence of the Lawgiver: but the voice of the Father of spirits is heard in the heart alone. Those who refuse to listen to it,—who are unable or unwilling to recognize the Presence of Goodness, Love, and Truth amongst them,—who despise or disregard that Presence, and call for 'signs and wonders,' call upon mere Power as their God,—brute power, we may call it, power displayed in the infraction of Order, in the stupefaction of the faculties of those who witness it,—such persons are in very deed 'idolaters'; they are widely distinguished from those spiritual worshippers, who 'worship the Father in spirit and in truth,' and whom 'the Father seeks to worship Him.'

Such were those in our Lord's day, who hearing the words 'full of grace and truth,' which proceeded continually out of his lips, were calling still for some sign from heaven, by which they might recognize his Divine Mission. And such in the olden times, if 'a prophet or a dreamer of dreams had arisen saying, Come, let us go after other gods, and serve them,'—and 'had given them a sign or a wonder,' and 'the sign or wonder had come to pass,'—would have followed the deceiver, and proved thereby, D.xiii.3, that they did *not* 'love the Lord their God with all their heart and with all their soul,'—that they were not listening for His Voice in the depths of their own inner being, ready to leap with joy whenever they heard it, and to say obediently, 'Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth,'—in one word, that they were not sincere heart-worshippers of the Eternal, loving the Truth for the Truth's sake. And, what would have been the case then, is the case now.

(ii) For, secondly, our Lord here teaches us that the Presence of truth, of Purity, and Goodness, and Love—will be itself a 'sign' to the believing heart, a convincing sign, that the Presence of God is here. Will any one say, 'How, then, shall we know what is true, if even miracles can deceive?' We must answer, they *have* deceived many, in all ages of the Church, down even to this 19th century, as its records will abundantly show, of which I will speak more at length this evening. 'But who, then, shall show us the Truth? Who shall help us to distinguish the Light from the Darkness?' Surely, the Light alone. 'God, who has caused the light to shine out of darkness, hath *shined*

in our hearts,' says the Apostle, 'to give us the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.' That knowledge of God, which Suns and Systems with all their wondrous teaching withhold from us, is given us in the life of love of the Son of Man, in his teachings respecting the Divine Father, which shine into our hearts with heavenly radiance, which satisfy the soul's desires and longings, which are their own evidence, because they answer to the spiritual wants of the living man, who is crying out for the Living God.

We shall not go to those who are sunk in sin and self-indulgence, who are eaten up with the cares of this world, or who are dulled and imbruted by ignorance, degraded even into savagery, and ask *them* to tell us 'Where is God?' and 'What has the Lord said to the spirit of man?' Nor, if such can give no clear response, shall we be ready to conclude that there are none on earth who can answer us, —that there is no One quickening even now the desires, and revealing Himself to the aspirations, of the purest human hearts and the highest human intellects,—no Shepherd who cares for the young, the lowly, the innocent, who long for guidance and look for help,—no prophets and teachers to speak Divine words to their brethren,—most Divine, when most human, and therefore best understood by every human being, as far as he is worthy of the name.

O no! my brethren, we know that in every age, in every place, there have been such prophets, though not accredited by signs and wonders, except those 'mighty works' of the spiritual world, by which the blind are made to see, and the lame to leap, and the dead to live. There are, and have been, and ever will be, till time shall be no longer, witnesses for God, bearers of His messages to their fellow-men, whose simple power is the power of the Truth, 'the sword of the Spirit, the Word of God.' Their message may not be enforced by extraordinary agencies, by the 'strong wind,' the 'earthquake,' and the 'fire.' But in the silence of the child-like and truth-loving soul it will be heard and understood, as 'a still small voice.'

XII.

SIGNS AND WONDERS.

PREACHED ON SUNDAY EVENING, JAN. 14, 1866, IN THE CATHEDRAL, MARITZBURG.

MATT. XII. 38, 39, 41, 42.

'THEN CERTAIN OF THE SCRIBES AND OF THE PHARISEES ANSWERED, SAYING, MASTER, WE WOULD SEE A SIGN FROM THEE. BUT HE ANSWERED AND SAID UNTO THEM, AN EVIL AND ADULTEROUS GENERATION SEEKETH AFTER A SIGN; AND THERE SHALL NO SIGN BE GIVEN TO IT, BUT THE SIGN OF THE PROPHET JONAS . . . . THE MEN OF NINEVEH SHALL RISE UP IN THE JUDGMENT WITH THIS GENERATION, AND SHALL CONDEMN IT; BECAUSE THEY REPENTED AT THE PREACHING OF JONAS, AND BEHOLD! A GREATER THAN JONAS IS HERE. THE QUEEN OF THE SOUTH SHALL ARISE IN THE JUDGMENT WITH THIS GENERATION, AND SHALL CONDEMN IT; FOR SHE CAME FROM THE UTTERMOST PARTS OF THE EARTH TO HEAR THE WISDOM OF SOLOMON, AND BEHOLD! A GREATER THAN SOLOMON IS HERE.'

THIS morning I explained that our Lord in these words has taught us two deep lessons:—

(i) That it is only unbelief that needs or desires the evidence of miraculous signs to confirm words of Divine Truth: it is 'an evil and adulterous generation' that 'seeketh after a sign';

(ii) That, to the true heart, the voice of God's Messonger, speaking words which come home to the conscience, will be itself a 'sign'—a sign that God Himself is speaking with them, that the message which reaches them is Divine. Such a 'sign' was the prophet Jonah in that ancient story to the people of Nineveh, who, though no miracle was wrought to enforce his warnings, repented at his word. Such a 'sign' also was the Son of Man, by

his Divine teaching, in his most holy life of love, and in his blessed death, to the Jews of his time, if only they had 'known the day of their visitation.'

I said that we would consider these matters somewhat more fully this evening.

I repeat then, it is really only unbelief that needs or desires the evidence of miraculous signs to confirm words of Divine Truth,—to convince the heart that such words convey a message from God to the soul. It may not be always *conscious* unbelief. Many pious persons, doubtless, in all ages, have fancied that their faith would be wonderfully strengthened, if they could but see with their own eyes some miraculous attestation of it. We ourselves probably at times have had our dreams about this,—have fancied what we should have done, if we had lived in the days of Christ and his apostles, if we had seen the mighty works of which we read, had seen the blind receive their sight, the deaf hear, the dumb speak, the lame walk, the lepers be cleansed, the dead raised. Then (we have said to ourselves) we should be sure of much which seems now very doubtful. Then, instead of dreading, we should heartily welcome, the laborious researches of those earnest, devout, true-hearted men, who are examining, with all the learning and diligence they can bring to bear upon the work, into the origin and character, the age and history, of the books of the New Testament as well as the Old. We should thank God for any measure of success, which he had been pleased to vouchsafe to their endeavours to bring forth the truth upon these subjects, out of the obscurity in which it has so long been hidden, and set it plainly before the eyes of their fellow-men. We may have sometimes felt inclined to say—

'O happy people that lived in those days! If *we* had but lived when Jesus lived on earth, when he preached to the multitudes seated upon a hillock on the mountain-side, or in that little bark by the shore of the sea of Galilee! If we had but heard with our own ears some at least of his living words, and seen with our own eyes some one or other of his mighty works! If one of ours had been healed by the touch of his hand! If we had been among the thousands, who ate of the bread and fish which he called into being, when 'they did all eat and

were filled, and they took up of the fragments that remained twelve baskets full!' If we had seen the widow's son rise up from his bier, or the ruler's daughter from her bed, or Lazarus, 'bound hand and foot with grave-clothes,' come forth out of his sepulchre! If we had been among the number of those, who saw the Lord himself when he had risen, who ate with him and talked with him after his resurrection, who heard him speak of 'the things pertaining to the kingdom of God,' and saw him then 'taken up,' till a cloud 'received him out of their sight'!

'Then—then—our faith would have been firm indeed; we should then have been quite at ease as to the results of Modern Criticism. We should not then have been troubled to find that, among those who know most about it, very much uncertainty attaches to the question of the age and authorship of the different Gospels,—to find that, for instance, in the words of the present Dean of Canterbury, which I quoted at greater length this morning, it is certain with respect to what we commonly call the Gospel of St Matthew, that—

> Both external and internal evidence forbid our supposing that the Apostle himself drew up the Gospel in its present form. We owe it to a translator and compiler, similar in character, and in the nature of his labours, to those who have delivered to us the other two Gospels [of Mark and Luke]. Who this was, we are totally unable to say

'We should not then shrink from the conclusion, if honest examination forced it upon us, that some of the statements of this unknown compiler, based upon mere traditionary reports, collected long after the age to which they referred, cannot be regarded as historically true, that some accounts may be inaccurate or exaggerated,—that the reality of this miracle or that may be disputed. If we had only had that personal assurance—that testimony by the eye and ear—which the men of that age enjoyed, we should not care for all this: we should not wish to deny what was proved to be true in respect of these records: we should not maintain, in the face of all critical evidence, their absolute infallibility. But we should still feel secure upon the main point

of our belief: we have seen and known, not now by the report of others, but by our own certain knowledge, that 'this is the Christ, the Saviour of the world.'

Nay, my brethren, are we so sure of this? Do you remember whose words those were, which I just this moment quoted, and under what circumstances they were spoken? Do you remember how it is written, John iv.39-42:—

> 'And many of the Samaritans of that city believed on him for the saying of the woman, which testified, 'He told me all that ever I did.' So when the Samaritans were come unto him, they besought him that he would tarry with them; and he abode there two days. And *many more believed, because of his own word;* and they said unto the woman, 'Now we believe, not because of thy saying: for we have heard him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world.'

You observe that these Samaritans did not see the *works* of Christ: he wrought no miracle to strike conviction home to their hearts: he merely spoke the word of God to them, and they believed it. They saw in his Divine teaching a 'sign,' that he was 'a Prophet come from God,' the Christ, the Messiah, the Great Prophet, for whom both Jews and Samaritans were looking as the 'Saviour of the World': they saw a 'sign' that in him the Living Word —the Lord of their spirits—had spoken.

I repeat then, brethren, it is really unbelief, which seeks for miracles to beget or confirm faith in the Eternal Truth of the Living God,—unbelief, I say, that is, a want of real faith in the presence of the Living God among us, as our Father and Friend,—a want of faith in His Divine Teaching, in His Divine Wisdom, in His Divine Goodness, Faithfulness, and Love,—an unwillingness to open wide the eyes of the mind, and let in freely the light, which God sends to us in any way of his own choosing,—a timid shrinking from the light, if not a fearful, panic-stricken dread of it, —an unwillingness to follow the Truth, as God's Angel and our Guide, whithersoever it leads us, to sacrifice anything for the Truth's sake,—in one word, a want of genuine love for the Truth as Truth. This is real unbelief, wherever it exists: though often it may be present in pious souls,

unsuspected, mixed up with much fervent zeal for God and often with not a little intolerance.

'An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign.' These were strong words of rebuke, suited especially, no doubt, to the character of those—the Scribes and Pharisees—whom our Lord was then addressing, and, indeed, we may say, suited to the ruling spirit of that age. But were there no devout persons among those multitudes, who flocked to listen to our Saviour as he preached, who heard his words and saw his works, just exactly as we have wished to hear and see them, and who, notwithstanding all they saw and heard, did *not* believe in him? Of those 'five thousand men, besides women and children,'—say altogether 'ten thousand' people,—who (according to Matthew) ate of the 'five loaves and two fishes,' and of those 'four thousand men, besides women and children,'—say 'eight thousand' people,—who ate of the 'seven loaves and the fishes,' how many were there who believed? and how strong was the faith of those who did believe? We know that in his last hours Judas betrayed him, Peter denied, and all the rest of the chosen 'Twelve' forsook him and fled. We know that when Matthias was chosen in the place of Judas, the names of the members of the infant Church 'together were about *an hundred and twenty*' only, Acts i.15. If, therefore, the above stupendous miracles are to be regarded as historically true,—if they are not to be ranked among the traditionary matter, which the unknown compiler of this Gospel collected,—then in these very instances we should have a most decisive proof, that miracles such as these have not that mighty convincing power, which we are so prone to ascribe to them. If the truth, which Jesus spoke, was not sufficient to attach men closely to him, as the Christ whom God had 'sanctified, and sent into the world' to bless them,—if the words of grace, which fell from his lips continually, were not enough to satisfy them, as the credentials of his Divine Mission—then no force of miracles whatever could have done it; they would but in any case have affected the understanding; they would not have led captive—corrected, and cleansed, and purified—the heart. After all that our Lord had said and done, we are told at the end of St Matthew's Gospel, xxviii.17, that 'some doubted.' And

our Lord himself says in his parable of the rich man and Lazarus, 'If they hear not Moses and the Prophets,'—if they hear not those words of life, which God has spoken to them all along by the lips of their fellow-men in other days, —if they feel not the truth and beauty of those Divine utterances, by whomsoever brought to them,—if they see not in them a 'sign' that 'the Lord hath spoken,'—then 'neither would they be persuaded though one rose from the dead.'

It is strange, however, to notice how eager has been the desire in every age of Christianity to build up a faith in the Divine Lessons taught by Christ and his Apostles upon miraculous evidence, as attesting to the mind of man their paramount authority. Let us trace a little down the stream of time the course of this singular development of human weakness and unbelief.

It is remarkable that in the long Epistle of Clement of Rome to the Corinthians, probably the *only* work, belonging to the first century, which has been preserved to us (besides any which are included in the Canon of the New Testament), there is no mention made of any miracles being wrought by the Apostles or first preachers of Christianity, or even by Christ himself; only reference is made to our Lord's Resurrection. And the same exactly is true of the letters of Ignatius and Polycarp, who died, the first near the beginning, the second after the middle of the second century. Clement is believed to have been the same who is mentioned by St Paul in his Epistle to the Philippians,—'With Clement also and other my fellow-labourers, whose names are in the book of life.' Ignatius, as you may have heard, is said, in some traditions of the Church, to have been that very child, whom our Saviour took into his arms, and set in the midst of his disciples. But, as Dr Cave observes:—

> How confidently or generally soever it be reported, the story at best is precarious and uncertain, not to say absolutely false and groundless. Sure I am that St Chrysostom (who had far better opportunities of knowing than they) expressly affirms of Ignatius, that he never saw our Saviour, or enjoyed any familiarity or converse with him.

As to Polycarp, Irenæus, who died A.D. 202, says, writing

in his old age, and remembering what he saw 'when he was yet a boy':—

> I can tell the very place where the blessed Polycarp used to sit and discourse, and also his entrances, his walks, his manner of life, the form of his body, his conversations with the people, and his familiar intercourse with John, as he used to mention, and with the others who had seen the Lord,—how he used to report their words, and what things those were which he had learned from them about the Lord, and concerning his *miracles*, and concerning his doctrine. All these were told by Polycarp, in consistency with the Holy Scriptures, as he had received them from the eyewitnesses of the word of life. These things by the mercy of God and the opportunity then afforded to me, I attentively heard, noting them down, not on paper, but in my heart; and these things by the grace of God I am always in the habit of recalling faithfully to mind.

In Clement, then, and Ignatius, we have writers who come the nearest to the apostolic times. Yet neither of these lays any stress in his writings upon the miracles wrought by Christ or his Apostles in attestation of their teaching, nor even mentions them, except, as I have said, that they both refer to the Resurrection of Christ. The same is true of Polycarp, who lived about fifty years later; though he seems to have *spoken* of the miracles of Christ, if indeed the report of Irenæus can be wholly trusted of things which he merely heard when a boy; more especially as we shall find that he lived himself in a credulous age.

Let me then proceed in this inquiry. I quoted this morning some passages from Eusebius—the great writer of Church History, who died A.D. 340,—three centuries, therefore, after the time of Christ,—and from whose works we know *all that we do know* of the history of those first three centuries, including some fragments which he extracts from an older historian, Hegesippus, who lived in the second century, but whose history, as a whole, has perished, and exclusive, of course, of any additional facts which we may gather from the incidental notices of other older writers, —such as Clement of Rome, Ignatius, Justin, Irenæus,

Clement of Alexandria, Tertullian, Origen, — some of whose works still survive. In the course of his history, Eusebius gives us several passages (some of which I produced this morning) from a very old writer, Papias, who lived near the beginning of the second century, who was, indeed, as the historian tells us, a man of 'small mind,' yet has some special claims on our attention, as having mixed with those who themselves had seen the Apostles of Christ. Eusebius, then, says about Papias :—

> It is worth while to add to the sayings of Papias, which have been related, other sentences of his, in which he records some other marvellous things, as having come to him by tradition. The story of Philip the Apostle having stopped with his daughters at Hierapolis has already been related. But how Papias tells us that he was in their company, and heard a recital of marvellous events from Philip's daughters, I will now particularize. He relates the resurrection of a dead man that took place where he was, and again another miracle, that happened to Justus surnamed Barsabas, how he drank a rank poison, and by the grace of the Lord suffered no harm.

We are now beginning to get into the stream of miracles, and shall find it swell larger and larger, as we depart still more and more from the apostolic times.

I pass over lightly the account which Eusebius gives, with the most perfect good faith and credulity, of a correspondence by letter between our Lord and Abgarus, king of Edessa, of which, he says—

> We have the evidence, in a written answer, taken from the public records of the city of Edessa; for in the public registers there, which embrace the ancient history and the transactions of Abgarus, these circumstances respecting him are found still preserved down to the present day.

I pass over this, I say, because these letters, which Eusebius gives at length, with an account of Thomas sending, according to Christ's promise, the apostle Thaddeus to work 'miracles' in Edessa, under the influence of

which the king and his people 'being filled with wonder, desired to hear the Gospel and embraced it,' are plainly forgeries of a later date than the earlier days which we are now considering, though old enough to have imposed on so great a writer as Eusebius.

In the account of the martyrdom of Polycarp, we find it stated that—

> When there was so great an uproar in the place that not many could hear, a voice came from heaven to Polycarp, 'Be strong, Polycarp, and contend manfully.' No one saw who it was that spoke: but the voice itself was heard by many of our brethren.

And then we read the following incident:—

> After he had repeated Amen, and had finished his prayer, the executioner kindled the fire. And, when it arose in great flames, we saw a miracle, those of us that were privileged to see it, and who therefore were preserved to declare the facts to others. For the flames presented an appearance like an oven, as when the sail of a vessel is filled with the wind, and thus formed a wall around the body of the martyr. And he was in the midst not like burning flesh, but like gold and silver purified in the furnace. We also perceived a fragrant odour, like the fumes of incense, or some other precious aromatic drugs. At length, the wicked persecutors, seeing that the body could not be consumed by fire, commanded the executioner to draw near to him, and to plunge his sword into him; and, when he had done this, such a quantity of blood gushed forth, that the fire was extinguished: so that the whole multitude were astonished that such a difference should be made between the unbelievers and the elect.

Even here, however, there is nothing really supernatural: there is no attempt at foisting fictitious miracles upon the faith of the Church. It is quite possible that all these occurrences did really happen by natural means,—that some zealous fellow-Christian did shout out a word of encouragement to the noble old man, and was not observed in the midst of the assembled multitudes,—that the flames

may have formed a kind of canopy around him, in the midst of which his body glowed and sparkled,—that some faithful soul may have thrown a bag of incense on the pyre,—that his gushing blood may even have damped the flame. At any rate, these simple blunders, which seemed miraculous to the eyes of the credulous people of those days, are very different from those of which we shall presently hear upon the authority of later Fathers.

Justin Martyr died about the time of the martyrdom of Polycarp, after the middle of the second century; and he adds a miracle to the account of our Lord's baptism, which is not found in the canonical Gospels, but existed evidently in the traditions of the time in which he lived. His words are:—

> And then, when Jesus had gone to the river Jordan, where John was baptizing, Jesus having gone down into the water, both *a fire was kindled in the Jordan*, and when he came up out of the water, the Apostles of this same our Christ have written that the Holy Spirit lighted upon him like a dove.

Justin Martyr, however, elsewhere distinctly asserts the continuance of miracles in his time, and from this date the evidence is ample and unbroken. The Protestant theory is, that miracles became gradually fewer and fewer, till they at last entirely disappeared. The historical fact is, that generation after generation, the miraculous accounts became more numerous, more universal, and more extraordinary.

Irenæus, who died A.D. 202, says, as Eusebius tells us, that, *even down to his time*, instances of divine and miraculous power were remaining in some Churches.

> Far are they from raising the dead, as the Lord and his disciples did, by prayer: yet even among the brethren *frequently* in a case of necessity, when a whole Church has united in much fasting and prayer, the spirit has returned to the lifeless body, and the man has been granted to the prayers of the saints. Some, indeed, most certainly and truly cast out demons: so that frequently those persons themselves, that were cleansed from wicked spirits, believed, and

> were received into the Church. Others have the knowledge of things to come, as also visions and prophetic communications: others heal the sick by the imposition of hands and restore them to health. And moreover, as we said above, even the dead have been raised, *and continued with us many years.*

Must we say that these statements were deliberate untruths?—that true love and faith and holiness, the elements of the true Christian life, were already being exchanged for passionate controversies, for fiery disputes about creeds and ceremonies, for burning zeal against heretics, for the growth of ascetic practices, the priestly power, and the Sacramental System, and so the unbelief of the age must be propped up on miracles? Yet assuredly this was the case, if not already in the age of Irenæus and Tertullian, yet very soon after it, when some of the greatest of the Fathers, 'the religious leaders of the Fourth Century,' as one has written*—

> admitted, eulogised, and habitually acted upon principles, that were diametrically opposed, not simply to the aspirations of a transcendent sanctity, but to the dictates of the most common honesty,—when they applauded falsehood, practised the most wholesale forgery, habitually and grossly falsified history, adopted to the fullest extent the system of pious frauds, and continually employed them to stimulate the devotion of the people.

These are severe charges, but they are shamefully and sorrowfully true,—the shame and sorrow being caused not by finding that men so great, and generally so good, could share in the credulity of an ignorant and unenlightened age, and mistake mere natural occurrences for supernatural prodigies,—the cessation of an epileptic fit for the casting out of a demon, the recovery from a state of catalepsy or collapse for a restoration from the dead,—but that men like Augustine and Jerome,—

> around whose brows the saintly aureole has sparkled for centuries with an unfading splendour,—who have formed the theological systems of Europe,—who have

* Lecky, *Rise and Influence of Rationalism*, I.p.168.

> been the arbitrators of so many controversies, and the objects of the homage of so many creeds,—

could have been guilty of such profane dishonesty, of such unmitigated falsehood. But indeed, as has been truly said,*—

> When we reflect on that surprising confidence and security, with which the principal Fathers of the Fourth Century have affirmed as true, what they themselves had either forged, or what they knew at least to be forged, it is natural to suspect that so bold a defiance of sacred truth would not be acquired or become general at once, but must have been carried gradually to that height by the custom and the example of former times, and a long experience of what the credulity and superstition of the multitude would bear.

In this sacred place it is difficult to produce from the writings of the Fathers instances to prove the truth of these assertions, which shall not be themselves irreverent and profane. Yet I must support my statement by one or two examples.

Eusebius, for instance, tells us the following 'wonderful event' about Narcissus, Bishop of Jerusalem, at the beginning of the Second Century, *Ecc.Hist.*vi.9.

> About the great watch of the Passover, while the deacons were keeping the vigils, the oil failed them. Upon this, all the people being very much dejected, Narcissus bade the men that managed the lights to draw water from a neighbouring well and to bring it to him. When this was done, Narcissus prayed over the water, and then bade them, with a firm faith in Christ, to pour it into the lamps. When they had done this, the nature of the water, contrary to all natural expectation, by an extraordinary and divine influence, was changed into the quality of oil; *and, by most of the brethren, a small quantity was preserved from that time until our own, as a specimen of the wonders then performed.*

* Middleton. *Free Inquiry, Introd. Chap.*

He tells us, viii.8, how at Tyre five martyrs were cast before a wild bull,—

> who indeed seized others, that approached them from without, with his horns, and tossed them in the air, leaving them to be taken up half dead, but only rushed upon the saints with rage and menaces; for the beast was not able even to approach them, but, beating the earth with his feet, and pushing with his horns hither and thither, and, from the irritation caused by the brands of glowing iron, breathing madness and death, yet was drawn back again by a divine interposition.

He tells us, *Martyrs of Palestine*, how a youth at Cæsarea was thrown into the sea and drowned: and he adds:—

> What happened immediately after this, would scarcely be credited by any who had not seen it with his own eyes: but, notwithstanding this, we cannot but record the events. As we may say, all the inhabitants of Cæsarea were witnesses of the fact. There was no age that was not present at this wonderful sight. As soon as this really blessed and holy youth was cast into the deepest parts of the sea, suddenly a roaring and uncommon crashing sound pervaded not only the sea, but the whole surrounding heavens, so that the earth and the whole city were shaken by it. And, at the same time with this wonderful and sudden shaking, the body of the divine martyr was cast by the sea before the gates of the city, as if unable to bear it.

Eusebius does not say that he himself was present on this occasion. But, as he was certainly living at the time, and a presbyter of Cæsarea, of which place he was afterwards Bishop, we may suppose that there really was an earthquake, such as is not uncommon in Palestine, which synchronized with this event. The other cases he reports from mere tradition: so that in all three instances the credit of this eminent writer may be relieved from the imputation of an evident intention to deceive. But what shall be said of the following narrative?

Towards the end of the Fourth Century, under the Emperor Valentinian II., lived the famous St Martin,

Bishop of Tours, of whom it has been said by one of his admirers that he was 'justly compared with the apostles and prophets, whom in all things he resembled, in faith, virtue, and miraculous power;' and the following account is given of one of his acts of 'miraculous power' by his disciple, Sulpitius Severus.

> St Martin had occasion, soon after his consecration, to visit the imperial palace. Valentinian, knowing that he was come to ask for that which he did not wish to grant, ordered him to be driven from the gate, instigated by his wife to this irreverence. The insulted bishop forthwith had recourse to the wonted aids of fasting, sackcloth, ashes, and prayers; and, at the end of a week, an angel appeared to him, commanding him to repeat his attempts to see the Emperor, and assuring him that every obstacle should now give way before him. In fact, neither doors, nor guards, obstructed his approach to the royal apartments. The Emperor, however, enraged at his unbidden intrusion, did not deign to rise at his entrance (a reverence due by an *Emperor* to a *Bishop!*) until the throne itself had burst out in flames, and the fire attacked the person of the king where he was sitting. The haughty prince, thus unwillingly driven from his seat, rose to St Martin; and moreover, being convinced and won by the same fervid logic, he granted all that was demanded, and loaded St Martin with honours. Isaac Taylor's *Ancient Christianity*, p.289.

Take again the following instance from nearly the same age.

> St Augustine, the ablest and most clear-headed of all the Fathers, and a man of undoubted piety, solemnly asserts that in his own diocese of Hippo, in the space of ten years, no less than seventy miracles had been wrought by the body of St Stephen, and that in the neighbouring province of Calama, where the relic had previously been, the number was incomparably greater. He gives a catalogue of what he deems undoubted miracles, which he say he had selected from a multitude so great, that volumes would be required to relate them all. In that catalogue, *De Civ. Dei*, xxii.8,

we find no less than *five cases of restoration of life to the dead.* *Lecky*, I.p.178.

And yet once more, one of the most learned of all the Fathers, one of the greatest authorities on many theological questions, the monk St Jerome, who died A.D.420, before the middle-point of the 'first thousand years of the Church's history,' writes as follows,—though the task, as it has been said, is by no means an easy one, so to condense his story and so to repeat his ineffable absurdities and falsehoods, just as they stand, without compromising the sacred things with which he mixes them, or the honour due to this hallowed place and to this congregation. Still the truth must be spoken, and it is well that you should hear it, more especially in these days, when you are called to 'hear the Church,' and are thrown back upon the 'Canons of Antioch,' and the 'Council of Chalcedon,' which Council was held A.D. 451, just thirty years after Jerome's death. St Jerome is writing the Life of St Anthony, the Patriarch of Monks, into whose mind, it seems, the vain thought had come, that no monk more perfect than himself had ever settled in the desert.

For his humiliation, it was revealed to him that the unexplored depths of the wilderness had long hidden from the view of mortals a solitary, who surpassed himself in the ascetic virtues, as far as *he* surpassed others; and he was ordered to go and search for him. Accordingly, in his ninetieth year, he set out from his monastery, propping his tottering frame upon a staff, and not knowing whither to direct his steps. While fainting under the heat of noon, St Jerome tells us, there met him a creature half man, half horse, at the sight of which he made the sign of the cross upon his forehead. The monster pointed out the proper path to him, and then gallopped off with the swiftness of a bird. St Anthony held on his way, but had gone only a few steps further, when lo! in a rocky glen he saw a negro-snouted urchin, whose forehead budded horns, while his lower parts were those of a goat; at the sight of whom St Anthony, like a good warrior, seized, we are told, the shield of faith and the breastplate of hope. The creature spoke to him, and said,

'I am a mortal being, and one of the inhabitants of the desert, whom people, deluded by various errors, call fauns and satyrs and goblins.' To check the incredulity of his readers, St Jerome assures them that an animal of this very species, which had been brought alive to Alexandria, had been steeped in brine after death, and sent to Antioch, where it had been examined by the Emperor. St Anthony reaches at last the cave of the holy Paul, who had lived there for nearly a century, clad with a wisp of palm-leaves, with the fruit of which he had been fed for forty years. But, since this supply had failed, a raven had brought him daily *half-a-loaf* for the last sixty years. The two hermits greet each other most kindly; and while they are talking, the raven perches on a branch of a neighbouring tree, and then lays a *whole loaf* upon the table. 'The Lord sent us food! he doubled the rations to his soldiers!' Paul, knowing his death to be at hand, desires his new friend to go to his monastery, and fetch the cloak which Athanasius had given him, and in which he wished to be buried. On his way back with the cloak, he sees a heavenly quire of prophets and apostles, and among them Paul in snow-white robes. He was already dead, then; and how should he be buried? There was neither spade nor shovel, nor any to help him! At this moment two lions came up to the corpse, and by their movements exhibited their sorrow. Then they dug the grave, just exactly as large as was needed, and, having finished their task, threw back their ears, licking St Anthony's hands and his feet, who, perceiving, as St Jerome says, that they 'asked a blessing from him,' complied with their request,—and so the burial was ended.*

But so ends not St Jerome's narrative. Nevertheless, I have now said enough to satisfy you that the charge is true that these Fathers of the Church were guilty—not only of the grossest credulity, but—of positive dishonesty, in the statements with which they sought to terrify or persuade an ignorant people.

* Isaac Taylor, *Ancient Christianity*, I.p.342-345.

And are we to be thrown back into the arms of these old monks,—these credulous, and, when not credulous, too often palpably dishonest, men,—as absolute, infallible, authorities, on matters of doctrine?—so that 'what,' by their lips,—

> the Church during the first thousand years of her history, declared to be the true faith, that *is* the true faith, and that we are to receive as such. More than this we are not bound to acknowledge: less we may not!

I think there are few of you who will not agree with me that the words which I am now about to quote from an eminent writer,* who has lately been taken to his rest, express a 'godly and wholesome' feeling, and very 'necessary for these times':—

> It may be a Christian-like and kindly office to palliate the errors, and to cloak the follies, and to give a reason for the false notions, of the Nicene Divines. But, when, on the other side, one thinks of the long centuries of woe, ignorance, persecution, and religious debauchery, which took their character directly from the perversity of these doctors, it is hard to repress emotions of the liveliest indignation. As to Jerome, who coined afresh and issued anew all the superstitions of his age, and who sent them forward for fourteen hundred years, one can hardly think of him otherwise than as an enemy of his kind. By a line of causation, not very indirect, he has been the author of a hundred times more human misery (not to look into the hidden world) than was inflicted upon the nations by a Tamerlane.

But, as true faith in the Divine faded, — faith, I mean, in the Divine Origin, the Divine Power, of Truth, and Love, and Holiness,—the desire for miracles grew stronger and stronger.

> If we pass from the fathers into the Middle Ages, we find ourselves in an atmosphere that was dense and charged with the supernatural. The demand for miracles was almost boundless, and the supply was

* Isaac Taylor, *Ancient Christianity*, I.p.346.

equal to the demand. Men of extraordinary sanctity seemed naturally and habitually to obtain the power of performing them, and their lives are crowded with their achievements, which were attested by the highest sanction of the Church. Nothing could be more common than for a holy man to be lifted up from the floor in the midst of his devotions, or to be visited by a Virgin, or by an angel. There was scarcely a town that could not show some relic that had cured the sick, or some image that had opened and shut its eyes or bowed its head to an earnest worshipper. . . . . Men, who were afflicted with apparently hopeless disease, started in a moment into perfect health, when brought into contact with a relic of Christ or the Virgin. . . . . All this was going on habitually in every part of Europe without exciting the smallest astonishment or scepticism. *Lecky*, I.p.153.

Why is it that all these accounts of modern miracles are received in our day with such derisive incredulity? Why is it that we do not stop to reason about them, but reject them at once with contemptuous scorn, as fitted only to beguile the ignorant and superstitious? Doubtless, the chief reason is the scientific spirit of the age, which has shown the fallacy of much that was formerly believed to be true, which has explained much that was formerly thought inexplicable and wonderful, which has reduced much, that seemed to be disorderly and supernatural, to the grand laws of order, established in the universe. As one has written (the Rev. W. Kirkus, *Journ. of Sacr. Lit.*, Oct. 1865, p.173) :—

Miracles have ceased to be expected, because they have ceased to be desired. Men love Wisdom far more than Power. They believe that order, foreknowledge, and a complete pre-arrangement, sufficient for all possible emergencies, are immeasurably more divine than any manifestations, however appalling, or even benevolent, of mere caprice. It may very safely be affirmed, that nothing would more utterly *terrify and distress* an ordinary reverent man, than a real miracle wrought before his own eyes. It will scarcely be denied that the God, whom *we* worship, is a far

> more glorious Being than the capricious Divinity [of the Nicene Fathers and the Middle Ages], who was supposed to be for ever interfering with the affairs of His creatures, and neutralizing the effects of His own imperfect foresight.

For us, my brethren, let the Truth be ever dear for the Truth's sake: thus alone shall we be truly servants of Him who is the Truth, and grow in the spirit of God's children. Let the loving words of Christ be their own witness to our hearts—the 'sign' of the Divine Authority by which he spoke. Whatever criticism may determine, as to the age and authorship of the different books of the New Testament, or the historical value of certain portions of the Gospel narratives, we are sure that they record innumerable lessons of Eternal Truth, which fell from our Lord's lips; we are sure that he has spoken to us the 'words of God'—the 'words of Eternal Life'—as one 'whom God had sent,' as one to whom 'God gave not the spirit by measure.' We 'receive his testimony,' as a message from God to the soul; we have 'set to our seal, that God is true.' Let the message which he brought us, the message of God's Love,—his teaching that God *is* Love and Holiness, that our Father is his Father, and his God our God, —be so welcome to our adoring faith, be such living water to our thirsting hearts, that we may be as unconcerned about such questions, as we should have been if we had lived in the days in which our Saviour lived on earth, and had heard him but as yesterday teach the multitudes, saying, 'When ye pray say, Our Father which art in Heaven.'

XIII.

CHRIST'S BODY AND BLOOD.

PREACHED ON SUNDAY MORNING, JAN. 21, 1866, IN THE CATHEDRAL, MARITZBURG.

JOHN VI. 67, 68.

'THEN SAID JESUS UNTO THE TWELVE, 'WILL YE ALSO GO AWAY?' THEN SIMON PETER ANSWERED HIM, 'LORD, TO WHOM SHALL WE GO? THOU HAST THE WORDS OF ETERNAL LIFE. AND WE BELIEVE AND ARE SURE THAT THOU ART THE CHRIST, THE SON OF THE LIVING GOD.''

IT was after 'many of his disciples had gone back, and walked no more with him,' that Jesus put the question which you have just heard to the Twelve. For what reason had these people gone back? Just before, we are told, they had welcomed him with acclamation, saying, 'This is of a truth that Prophet that should come into the world.' They were minded to 'come and take him by force to make him a king.' They had hastened after him across the sea of Galilee, when they found that he had privately departed from them; and they had thronged about him once more, full of eager excitement, to listen to his teaching. How was it, then, that many of them—not many of the 'people' only, of the great multitudes that followed him, but 'many of his disciples,' many of those who had clung for some time closely to him, had attended his steps from place to place, had heard his words and witnessed his doings—'went back, and walked no more with him'?

They were offended, we read, at some of his expressions —at his saying to them,—

'As the Living Father hath sent me, and I live by the

Father, so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me,'—

At his teaching them,—

'Verily, verily, I say unto you, except ye eat the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you;'

He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him.'

Seeing their hesitation, knowing in himself that his disciples 'murmured' at these sayings, our Lord at once explained his meaning. He told them that he did not intend his words to be literally understood by them, as if he spoke of their eating and drinking, in a physical sense, the actual flesh and blood of his mortal body. He was speaking about their eating and drinking spiritual food, 'the meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of Man would give unto them,' the 'true bread,' the 'bread of God, which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world,'—about their feeding by faith on that sustenance of the soul, which he, the Son of Man, was 'sealed' of God the Father to give them,—on those quickening words of his divine teaching, 'which were spirit, which were life,'—or, to sum up all in one word, about their 'believing on him whom God had sent,' with the message of Eternal Life for the sons of men. Yet this availed not: they would not any longer follow him: 'they went back, and walked no more with him.'

The fact was, that they had been looking for something other than this: they had been 'labouring for the meat that perisheth, not for that which endureth unto everlasting life.' They had been expecting, probably, some great profit to accrue to themselves in a temporal sense, some great deliverance and glory for their nation, from the presence of that Prophet, mighty in word and deed, the long-looked for Messiah, who, as they supposed, had at length been revealed among them. They had fondly hoped for some grand triumph to be achieved under his auspices over their hated Roman conquerors, for some place of special honour in his kingdom, as the reward of their own exertions, in that 'day of regeneration, when the Son of Man should sit upon the throne of his glory.' And now all this was abolished at a word. They were told not to labour for

those perishing things, but for the bread and water of life. But they cared not for this. They did not wish that he should reign with a silent spiritual power, a power not of this world, that 'cometh not with observation,' as Lord of their inner man, upon the throne of their hearts, by the Living Word speaking within them. They did not want to hear merely the words of his divine teaching. They could not brook the notion of simply believing on him,—becoming the lowly followers of this despised Nazarene, in all things 'just, and pure, and lovely, and of good report,'—sitting at his feet, receiving with obedient faith his precious lessons of truth and love, eating and drinking daily the words which he spoke to them, those words which were 'spirit' and 'life.' They were not truly hungering and thirsting after righteousness, and therefore they cared not to be fed with that living bread. They would not come to him that they might never hunger, nor believe on him that they might never thirst, but have within them constantly 'a well of water springing up into everlasting life.' In one word, their hearts were not right before God; they had not 'heard and learned of the Father' in the secrets of their own inner being; and therefore they were not 'drawn of the Father,' they did not 'come unto Christ.' We read—

> 'Jesus knew from the beginning who they were that believed not. And he said, Therefore said I unto you, that no man can come unto me, except it were given him of my Father.'

Let us now consider what profitable lessons we may draw for ourselves from this narrative.

(i) And here, first, I would bid you observe, my brethren, that our Lord does not reprove the hesitation of these disciples. He does not rebuke them for 'murmuring' at the difficulty of his words. He does not condemn them because they said, 'This is a hard saying; who can hear it?' He dealt very tenderly and considerately with them. He knew that it *was* a hard saying, that they might very naturally be 'offended' at it. He probably meant them to be struck with it—meant them to feel the difficulty and the hardness of it. We know that on other occasions he did this, using strong and, as we should say,

almost paradoxical expressions, in order thereby to attract more forcibly the attention of his hearers, and fix more deeply some all-important lesson in their minds:—as when he said,—

> 'If any man come after me, and *hate* not his father and mother, and his own life also,—he cannot be my disciple.'

So here he made use, we may believe, of these remarkable expressions, 'eat me,' 'eat my flesh,' and 'drink my blood,' in order to startle them from their dull dreamy thoughts of worldly gain and glory, and arouse them to consider the deep spiritual meaning that lay really hidden in his words. He wished them to discern for themselves that, as Clement of Alexandria observes,—

> In saying, 'Eat ye my flesh and drink ye my blood,' he was manifestly *speaking by an allegory of the drink of faith, and of the promise;*—

that, as Tertullian says,—

> While describing the word as life-giving, because the word was spirit and life, he called the same also his flesh, because the word was also made flesh,—something, forsooth, to be hungered after for life's sake, *to be devoured by hearing, ruminated upon by the understanding, digested by faith.*

Very remarkable, also, are the words of Origen on this point, which I will quote at length:—

> *We are said to drink the blood of Christ, when we receive his discourses.* His flesh is meat indeed, and his blood is drink indeed; inasmuch as he supplies and refreshes the whole race of men *with the flesh and with the blood of his word,* as with pure meat and drink. Our Lord and Saviour said, 'Unless ye shall eat my flesh, and shall drink my blood, ye will have no life in you;' 'My flesh is truly meat, and my blood is truly drink.' Because, then, Jesus is altogether clean, all his flesh is meat, and all his blood is drink,—that is, every work of his is holy, and every word of his is true. He, who cannot bear this, may perhaps twist aside, and turn away his hearing, like to those who said, 'How will this man give us His flesh to eat? Who can hear Him? And they departed from Him.'

But you, if you are sons of the Church, if you are imbued with Gospel mysteries, if the Word made flesh dwells in you, acknowledge what we say, for it is the Lord's; lest perchance he, who ignores, may be himself ignored. Acknowledge that these are figures, which are written in the divine volumes; and, therefore, as spiritual, and not as carnal, examine and understand what is said. Since, if ye receive these words as carnal, they hurt you, and do not profit. In the Gospels, too, there is the 'letter which killeth': the 'killing letter' will not be found in the Old Testament only. For, if ye follow according to the letter this very thing which is said, 'Unless ye eat my flesh and drink my blood,' this letter killeth.
Next after *his* flesh, the flesh of Christ, *Peter* is clean meat, and *Paul*, and all the Apostles; and in the third place, the disciples of these. And thus each one, according to the measure of his excellencies and the purity of his affections, is made clean meat to his neighbours.

But these men in the text were too 'slow of hearing,' and too 'dull of heart,' to comprehend this. And so 'they strove among themselves, saying, How can this man give us His flesh to eat?'—taking his expressions in their most literal sense. And their kind and gentle Teacher did not condemn them severely, as guilty of some crime, for being thus perplexed with his words, for questioning among themselves about them, for doubting the possibility of that which they took to be their meaning. He merely says, 'Doth this offend you? What and if ye shall see the Son of Man ascend up where He was before?'—that is, apparently, 'What and if I shall go on to say that, when I am gone from you, you must still eat my flesh and drink my blood, if you would have any life in you? It is plain from this that I do *not* mean my actual, corporeal, flesh and blood.' And he goes on at once to make more clear his meaning, and to explain that he was but speaking by an allegory:—

'It is the spirit of my words that quickeneth; the flesh, the mere letter of them, profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit and they are life.'

The first lesson, then, which I would draw from these words is this, that there was no sin in this their doubt and perplexity, and that neither shall we ourselves be condemned for having such doubts at times, and feeling such perplexities. There are, indeed, deep things in religion: 'difficulties there must be,'—as one has said before in this place, preaching on this text,—'difficulties there must be to the finite mind of man, when he seeks to search into the deep things of God.' But there are other things in Scripture which are *not* deep things,—which are quite within the reach of our human faculties,—which are meant to be so, and we were meant to exercise our faculties upon them. Believing, therefore, as we all do, that the Bible contains the record of a revelation from God, we are not to come to it with a preconceived notion of what the character of such a Book must be, of the form and manner in which such a record must be given to us. We must not set out with assuming that a Book of this kind must be in every line and letter infallibly true. The revelation itself must, of course, be true; for that is the very word of God. But this is the vehicle and record only of the revelation, conveyed to us by fallible men. And we have no warrant to assume beforehand that the Divine Wisdom will see it good to secure each line of this record from error of every kind. Otherwise, we should be equally justified in assuming that the same Divine Wisdom would assuredly protect the text itself of the sacred volume from all possible injury or corruption, or, as some good men have actually held, that the very vowel-sounds and accents which were not expressed in the original Hebrew, but on which the meaning of a passage often entirely depends, must have been preserved by Divine Power, before the invention of signs with which to mark them, unchanged from the first through the traditions of successive ages.

We must rather search diligently, with all possible care and industry, the Book itself, bringing the best powers of the intellect to bear upon it, that we may thus by repeated, close examination, make out what the Bible really is,—how far the Divine Spirit has left the writers to themselves in matters of common life, with reference to questions of science or history, with the possibility of falling into error, variance, contradiction, in the use of

their human faculties,—how far He has permitted them to use the language of poetry, or the products of rhetorical and inventive imagination, as a means of conveying the precious lessons of Divine Truth, which yet they were commissioned from above to teach to their fellow-men,—how far, in reading the Scriptures, it is necessary to remember that 'the flesh,' the mere outward letter, 'profiteth nothing:' the words by which the Holy Ghost speaks to us, 'they are spirit—they are life.' In one word, we are not only at liberty, but we are *bound* to apply to the sacred writings the strictest, most searching, most laborious criticism,—to spend on them, in this way, such an amount of minute care and toilsome labour, as we should never think of spending on any other book,—just because this book is so unlike any other, so full of Divine light and life, that we *feel*, as we read, its inspiration, we may almost say, on every page. If this be done in a right spirit, we shall not displease our God by making such investigations, or by stating plainly the results of our inquiries. Rather, it is our duty to do this, as in His sight, and in humble dependence on His help and blessing, that we may understand better the nature of that gift, which His wise and gracious Providence has prepared for us, when of old He 'caused all Holy Scriptures to be written for our learning.'

(ii) I have said, *if this be done in a right spirit.* The doubts and murmurings of these disciples, their difficulties and objections, were not wrong *in themselves*, but in the spirit which prompted them. These men had not 'heard and learned of the Father,' and therefore they had not come lovingly, with obedient child-like faith, to Christ. God had spoken indeed to them, as He speaks to us all, with the still small voice of His Spirit, in the silence of their hearts; and the Light, the 'true Light,' which 'is the Life of men,' which 'lighteneth every man that cometh into the world,' had shone within the darkness of their minds. The Living Word had imparted His gracious teachings, and uttered His solemn warnings, to them also, as he does daily to us: but they did not care to hear; they did not receive and obey them. Their difficulty, therefore, was not that of humble, earnest inquirers, seeking to know the true meaning of the words addressed to them, that they might cherish them, and lay them to heart.

They did not love the Truth for the Truth's sake; and therefore they were not drawn by the gentle force of the Spirit—by 'the cords of a man,' as it were—unto Christ; but, when his words were explained, and their carnal hearts were disappointed of their vain hopes, at once they 'went back, and walked no more with Him.'

Let us be sure, my brethren, that our thoughts and aims are not such as theirs, lest we too fall after the same example of unbelief. Our Heavenly Father, by His Holy Spirit, is working in us daily 'both to will and to do of His own good pleasure.' And what are we doing? Are we heeding, as obedient children, these gracious visitations, hearing and learning continually of the Father, realizing His Presence with us at all times, keeping ever the ear of our souls attentive, to receive, as He shall be pleased to impart them, new lessons of eternal truth, new lessons of faith and hope and love, still looking up to Him for light, still longing for closer converse with Him, still seeking to be transformed more and more 'by the renewing of our minds, that we may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect Will of God?' In this temper only shall we come aright to the critical study of the Bible. But, coming thus, we need fear no evil; our Father's Hand will hold us up, His Spirit will instruct and teach us; and, whatever may be the results of criticism, on the Old Testament or on the New, we shall still assuredly be able to say with the Apostle in the text, and to say with increasing confidence, as the sacred volume and its contents become more thoroughly known to us, 'Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of Eternal Life.'

(iii) The next point that we shall notice is this. It is the same which we were taught by the text of last Sunday. The Apostle in the text bases his conviction that Jesus was 'the Christ, the Son of the Living God,' *not* upon any mighty works which he had witnessed, but upon the living words, the words of power to find him in his own inner being, which he had heard from his lips.

> 'Then said Jesus unto the Twelve, Will ye also go away? Then Simon Peter answered him, Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of Eternal Life, and we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the Living God.'

The multitude had said, just before, 'What *sign* showest thou that we may see and believe thee? What dost thou work?' But signs and wonders, whatever appeal they make to the intellect, have no power to touch the heart. It was an 'evil and adulterous generation,' as we know, that 'sought after a sign.' Nay, in Deuteronomy we are expressly taught that signs and wonders are *not* to be received by us, as credentials sufficient to prove that the message attested by them has really come from God.

> 'If there arise among you a prophet, or a dreamer of dreams, and giveth thee a sign or a wonder, *and the sign or wonder come to pass,* whereof he spake unto thee, saying, 'Let us go after other gods whom thou hast not known, and let us serve them,'—thou shalt not hearken unto the words of that prophet or that dreamer of dreams; for the Lord your God proveth you, to know whether ye love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul.'

And so St Peter appeals in this text, not to any miracles which Christ had wrought, but to the words of Eternal Life which he had spoken, as a sure proof that he was the Messiah, the Son of God and the Son of Man, whom the Father had 'sealed,' to give the 'bread of life' to men. His Master had said, 'My words, the words which I speak unto you, they are spirit and they are life,' and he had felt them to be so. Such words as Jesus had spoken, so 'quick and powerful,' 'sharper than any two-edged sword,' 'discerning the thoughts and intents of the heart,' he recognized in the very depths of his being, as the words of God, the words of Truth, the words of Eternal Life. No multiplication of 'signs and wonders' would have made him more sure of this; no absence of signs would have made him doubt it.

It is this truth which I desire to fasten in your minds, as an anchor of the soul, sure and steadfast, in these days of doubt, and stormy, surging controversy. It is certain that in this age of ours every part of the New Testament, as well as the Old, will be subjected to a close and searching criticism. We cannot, if we would, escape this trial of our faith: for God, our God and Father, has called us to it. As plainly as in the days of the Reformation men were called to brace up their minds for a mighty

struggle between the powers of light and the powers of darkness, so surely, if we read the signs of the times, the like struggle is coming now—nay, rather, is come—upon *us*. *Then* the fresh thought and life of the new age, —through God's providential Wisdom, which gave us the printing-press,—began to break forth out of the long dead sleep of the Middle Ages, when the noblest minds were coerced into inactivity by the terrors of Church Authority, and the multitude was sopped and drugged, as we heard last Sunday, with idle superstitions, with stories of dreams and visions, of saints and virgins, and of the wonders innumerable, which were wrought by the touch of their hands, of the hem of their garments, or even of their bones. And that new life came at once into conflict with the dogmas of the Church believed to be infallible; and even Galileo was compelled upon his knees to declare that he—

> abjured, cursed, and detested the false opinion, which maintains that the Sun is the centre of the System and immoveable, and that the Earth is *not* the centre, and is moveable:—

while, in the same fearful death-grapple of the old and the new, there were many who suffered yet more than Galileo for the cause of God's Truth,—noble brothers of our race, who died at the stake, that they might maintain for us the right of exercising our reason in matters of religion—our birthright, which we will maintain as English Protestants,—men who then were cursed and excommunicated, but whose memories now are blessed.

A change it is true has passed over us, in respect of that particular question, which roused the anger of the Church in the days of Galileo. Pascal, though a Romanist himself, wrote long ago—

> It is in vain that you have procured against Galileo a decree from Rome, condemning his opinion of the Earth's motion. Assuredly, *that* will never prove it to be at rest. And, if we have unerring observations proving that it turns round, not all mankind together can keep it from turning, nor themselves from turning with it.

And 'the Church' *has* 'turned' already on this point,

though two centuries had to pass before the edicts at Rome against Galileo and the Copernican System were repealed. And even, so late as 1751, the great naturalist Buffon was compelled by the Sorbonne, the 'Theological Faculty' of Paris,—the same body of whom I spoke lately, who doubted whether a sick infant, in danger of death, might not be *drowned*, in order to ensure its *baptism*, and its safety therefore, according to their notions, in another world, to make the following statement with respect to his works :—

> I declare that I had no intention to contradict the text of Scripture,—that I believe most firmly all therein related about the Creation, both as to order of time and matter of fact,—and I abandon everything in my book respecting the formation of the Earth, and, generally, all which may be contrary to the narration of Moses.

Is it not time for theologians to do their own work effectually, and relieve the great students of Nature, like these, from the cruel necessity of publishing the grand truths of Science with a lie in their mouths, or else with a halter round their necks? Is it not time to show that it is *we*, the theologians, who are in fault, not they,—for we have never done our duty to our brethren, that duty for which we have been especially set apart,—we have never thoroughly examined our own sacred books, and ascertained, as we should have done by an honest inquiry, that the notion of Moses having written the Pentateuch, under infallible Divine Instruction, is a mere dogma, wholly untenable, and contradicted by the plainest evidence? And is there not reason to hope that in due time the South-African Church,—which has laid down lately the law that a clergyman 'is not permitted to deny that Moses is the author of the Pentateuch,'—may yet rescind its dogma on this point, since the Roman Church, about forty years ago, has in the words of the Cardinal, who proposed the measure, 'wiped off the scandal from itself,' by repealing the censures on Galileo and Copernicus; and so now in the Catholic Universities they can speak of the 'Copernican *Theory*,' whereas the professors used to be required, in deference to the Church, to speak only of the 'Copernican *Hypothesis*'?

But, for all this, we know too well that the spirit, which silenced Galileo, and sent our great Reformers to the stake, still survives in great vigour,—and not in Roman Catholic countries alone, still less in the bosom of all Roman Catholics. It has existed all along—it exists now as strongly as ever—in the very heart of (so called) Protestant Churches. There have been Protestant Popes, and Persecutors, for the repression of free thought, whenever they had the power,—as well as Romanist. It was Calvin who had Servetus burnt to death, and Melancthon, 'the mildest of men, who declared that he deserved to have his bowels pulled out, and his body torn to pieces.' As the Rev. Sydney Smith has said:—

> The last fires of persecution, which were lighted in England, were by Protestants. Bartholomew Legate, an Arian, was burnt by order of King James the First in Smithfield on March 18, 1612. On April 11 in the same year, Edward Weightman was burnt at Lichfield, by order of the Protestant Bishop of Lichfield and Coventry.

The essence of that Evil Spirit is the setting up of *Authority* in any form against the simple power of the *Truth*. This is the real Spirit of Antichrist, wherever it exists, in Papist or Protestant,—the putting any earthly Person or office, or any earthly Body as 'the Church,' to 'sit as God in the Temple of God,' claiming the authority of God, claiming to lord it, as God's vice-regent, over the conscience of man, and over that reason of his, which is meant to obey the Living Word, the Voice of the Truth, —and that alone.

And we are entering into a time, when, as I believe, the war will again be internecine between these two powers,—between mere blind Church Authority, which seeks to enforce the dogmas of past ages, regardless of the mighty intellectual advance, which has been made by the human race since the dawn of the Reformation period, and the Living Spirit, the true Lord of the Church, the Spirit of Truth. And I say that we cannot any of us expect to escape this conflict: we may not desire to do so: we must boldly face our duty like men, and not in shrinking

cowardice, or easy indolence, leave the battle to be fought by our children.

But, in order that we may enter this strife with a cheerful courage, and maintain our position with unwavering constancy, we must feel that the ground is firm under our own feet, that we stand upon a rock, which, come what will, can never be removed. It is for this reason I have so earnestly desired to lead you off from the unstable ground, on which so many excellent persons are trying to maintain their footing, the infallibility of Scripture, and have sought to fix your faith firm upon the principle of God's Eternal Truth and Love. Assuredly, the progress of Modern Criticism will disturb the popular belief in many parts of the New Testament as well as the Old. You heard last Sunday how the first three Gospels are admittted by one living dignitary of our Church, to be the work of Compilers, though based upon apostolical notices. But let me produce the words of another eminent writer, a strong advocate for Church Authority, from whom on a former occasion I quoted at some length in reference to the Canon of the Old Testament (the Rev. Dr Irons, *The Bible and its Interpreters*). Let us now hear some of his statements as to the Canon of the New.

> Justin Martyr [who died A.D. 165] does not once quote any Epistle of St Paul, either in his Apologies or his Dialogue. Bishop Marsh thought that he was unacquainted with the Gospels—[the *four* Gospels]—as Scripture. Origen [who flourished about A.D. 250] is intimate with the Epistles: yet, at the beginning of the Second Century [the writer means during the *whole first half* of the Second Century] there is almost total silence in the Church as to the formal existence of 'the Gospels.' . . . .
>
> St Paul, though writing thirty years after the Ascension, and mentioning in his Epistles several sayings of our Lord, never once seems aware of the existence (for example) of St Matthew or his Gospel. The same may be said of all the Epistolary writers in the Canon, to the close of the First Century. The very language, in which our Lord uttered his Divine discourses, no criticism has found out. If he spoke them

> in Greek, are we to suppose that the Galilean multitudes, who heard him, understood Greek? If he spoke them in Hebrew [that is, the Syro-Chaldaic of the time], are the 'original words' entirely lost? Or, was that which he spoke to them in *Hebrew* 'brought to their remembrance' thirty years afterwards in *Greek*, and written down in Greek by the Evagelists? *p.*17.

Nay, even Dr C. Wordsworth observes, *Greek Testament*, p.xxii, that the 'parallelisms' in his Gospels,—

> it is to be observed, are in *Greek*; and they are in records of our Lord's discourses, not spoken in Greek, but in Syro-Chaldaic. They are parallelisms of *translation*.

And he goes on to try to explain this fact consistently with his notion, p.xix, that—

> It can never be granted that there are any, even the least, errors or inaccuracies, in the New Testament.

I repeat, then, when the Gospels come to be thoroughly examined by scholars, with all the light of Modern Learning—as they will be assuredly in this our day in England, —as they have been already on the Continent,—it may be found that in the 'compilation' of the first three Gospels, there are statements included which conflict with each other or with statements made elsewhere, as well as traditionary reminiscences of our Lord's sayings and doings, recorded after the lapse of many years,—perhaps after the lapse of two or three generations after the time of Christ,—which cannot be regarded as historically true. And, though the fourth Gospel appears to be not, like the rest, a compilation, but is chiefly, if not wholly, the work of one writer, yet it may be found to have difficulties of its own, as great as any which may affect our view of the historical accuracy of the others.

But what then? We say still with St Peter in the text,—'Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of Eternal Life.' We say with the Samaritans, of whom we heard last Sunday,—'We have heard ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the World.' We know from these records, with all their defects, that the Christ has spoken to us words of Eternal Truth that never shall die,—that he has shown us of the

Father,—that he has led us to the Father,—that this was the work, which he was 'sanctified' and 'sent into the world' to do, not to 'glorify himself.' We know that we show ourselves true Christians, true believers in Christ, true children of God, when we receive that Divine Teaching, which carries conviction to the heart and conscience, which we know and feel to be the Truth. We know that our salvation cannot possibly consist in implicitly believing the historical certainty of this or that miraculous narrative. or in the unquestioning reception of this or that particular dogma,—but in a 'faith that worketh in us by love' to God and to our fellow-men,—in 'doing the Will of our Father in Heaven,'—in listening to the Living Word, which speaks with us in God's name continually, in the Bible and out of the Bible, in the teaching of our Lord and his apostles, or in the secrets of our own hearts, and in the daily intercourse of life.

For elsewhere than in the Bible, we must remember, the Lord our God is speaking with us continually, and His Word will be heard by the childlike heart. Thanks be to God our gracious Father! we are not left alone for a moment by that Divine Teacher, whom, as St John tells us, our Lord, before he suffered, promised that the Father would give us, that he might abide with us for ever. That Spirit acts upon our minds and on the minds of our brethren, that we may act and re-act on one another, and be as prophets of God to each other. As the ancient Father said, already quoted, we are each in our measure designed of God to be 'meat and drink'—'living bread'—to one another. In the writings of our fellow-men, in their words, in their actions, we may hear, if we will, continually the utterances of the Living Word of God.

Let us, then, walk thoughtfully along the course of life, bearing in mind this grave responsibility. He, who has called us into being, has given us those wondrous powers, by which we may glorify His Name, and be ministers of God to one another. Let us use them daily as in His sight, 'speaking the *Truth*'—the Word of Life—'to one another,' and never shrinking from the duty of confessing boldly before men the Truth on any subject, as God has given us to see it—to see it sometimes, perhaps, more plainly than others. But let us strive to 'speak the Truth

in *Love*,' with tender consideration for the feelings of others, even for the prejudices of those whose views differ from our own,—with just and charitable appreciation of all that is good and true, 'pure and lovely, and of good report,' on their side of the question, as well as on our own,—and with a fixed determination by God's help to abstain as far as possible from all harsh thoughts and from all hard language, however provoked, remembering that the 'wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God,' that 'the servant of the Lord must not strive, but be gentle to all men.' Thus, then, in the words of the Apostle—

> 'As every man hath received the gift, even so let us minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God, that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom be praise, and dominion for ever. Amen.'

XIV.

HOLY COMMUNION.

PREACHED ON SUNDAY EVENING, JAN. 21, 1866, IN THE CATHEDRAL, MARITZBURG.

JOHN VI. 67, 68.

'THEN SAID JESUS UNTO THE TWELVE, 'WILL YE ALSO GO AWAY?' THEN SIMON PETER ANSWERED HIM, 'LORD, TO WHOM SHALL WE GO? THOU HAST THE WORDS OF ETERNAL LIFE. AND WE BELIEVE AND ARE SURE THAT THOU ART THE CHRIST, THE SON OF THE LIVING GOD.''

I ADDRESSED you upon these words this morning, and drew your attention to the connexion in which they stand in the Gospel narrative. I pointed out that many of the disciples of Jesus were offended with his words, because he had spoken of their 'eating his flesh and drinking his blood,' and they took these words literally, not understanding that he was speaking figuratively of receiving his doctrine, of eating his words,—that 'bread of life,' which he was sent to give them,—that 'flesh,' which he gave for the life of the world, to feed the longing hearts, and support the fainting spirits, of labouring, sorrowful, sin-stricken men,—that 'flesh and blood' of his Divine teaching, which was 'meat and drink' indeed for the soul of man, of which whosoever eateth and drinketh shall live for ever,—shall 'never hunger and never thirst,'—shall feel that the deep desires of the inner being are satisfied, in the knowledge of Him, whom truly to know is Life Eternal. They did not comprehend the hidden sense of that strange expression, with which he meant, no doubt, to arrest their attention. They asked, 'How can this man give us his flesh to eat?' They said, 'This is a hard saying: who can hear it?' They had not the believing heart of true followers of Christ: they

felt not the inner meaning—the 'quickening spirit'—of his words: they rested in the 'flesh'—the mere outward letter—of them, which 'profited nothing.' They did not perceive that his words—they were 'spirit'—they were 'life.' And so, we are told, 'from that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him.'

I spoke at some length this morning of the true symbolical meaning of these words, 'eat my flesh and drink my blood': and I showed also by quotations from some of the most eminent Fathers,—as Clement of Alexandria, Tertullian, Origen,—that they knew how to give the right explanation of them, and they sometimes did give it. Thus, for instance, Clement said—

> In saying, 'Eat ye my flesh and drink ye my blood,' he was manifestly speaking by an allegory of the drink of faith and of the promise;

and Tertullian—

> While describing *the word* as life-giving, he called the same also *his flesh*,—to be hungered after for life's sake, devoured by hearing, ruminated upon by the understanding, digested by faith;—

and Origen—

> We are said to *drink the blood* of Christ, when we *receive his discourses*. He supplies and refreshes the whole race of men with *the flesh and with the blood of his word*, as with pure meat and drink.

I will now add two more such quotations from the Fathers. Thus Eusebius says:—

> Wherefore he instructed them to hear spiritually the things which had been spoken about his flesh and blood. For do not suppose, said he, that I am speaking of the flesh with which I am clothed, that it is needful to eat it, or imagine that I am enjoining to drink this sensible blood of the body. But, know well that *my words*, which I have spoken to you, they are spirit and they are life. So that *his words and his discourses* are *the flesh and the blood*, of which he who partakes, ever nourished as it were with heavenly bread, will partake of heavenly life.

And Jerome writes :—

> The body of Jesus I take to be the *Gospel*, the *holy Scriptures;* I take it to be *his doctrine.* And when he says, 'Whosoever shall not eat my flesh and drink my blood,' although it may be understood also in a mystical sense, yet *more truly the body of Christ and his blood* is *the word of the Scriptures*, is *divine doctrine.* If, then, we hear the word of God, and both the word of God and *the flesh and blood of Christ is poured into our ears*, while we are thinking of something else, into how great a danger do we run! Thus, then, in respect of *the flesh of Christ*, which is *the word of doctrine, that is, the interpretation of the holy Scriptures*, according to our willingness, so also do we receive food: if thou art holy, thou findest refreshment; if thou art a sinner, thou findest torment.

Thus, then, by the general consent of these ancient Fathers, the expression to 'eat the flesh and drink the blood' of Christ means 'more truly' to receive with the heart his doctrine, to eat by a living faith, and digest by devout meditation, the 'bread of heaven,' the divine teaching which he brought us. You are now at this moment eating the flesh of Christ and drinking his blood, as many of you as have welcomed with joyful obedient faith the precious message of our Father's love, which Jesus delivered to us,—as many of you as believe that, in his work on earth,—in his labours and sufferings,—in his life of unwearied love and tender pity for the souls of men,—in his constancy even unto death, whereby he sealed the Gospel of his life,—he was showing us continually of the Father, in whose name he came, whose words he spoke, whose Spirit was given to him without measure,—that he was manifesting to us our Father's tenderness, our Father's merciful pity for the fallen and outcast, our Father's compassion for the sorrowful and suffering, our Father's sympathizing love for his own dear children, the faithful and true in heart, the meek and pure and loving, those who are hungering and thirsting after righteousness, those who are striving by God's help to be 'perfect even as their Father in heaven is perfect.'

I repeat, if we believe this, that in all the ministry of

Jesus on earth he was seeking 'not his own will, but the Will of the Father who sent him,'—was 'manifesting the Father's Name,'—was speaking 'not of himself, but of the Father,' 'as the Father gave him commandment,' —was 'finishing the work which the Father gave him to do,'—if we believe that in this manifestation of the Love of God to Man, which Jesus made in his life and death, the Living Word, the Eternal Truth, was speaking,—if we thus believe that 'God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself,'—then do we truly feed upon the body and blood of Christ. And then, too, as Origen says, in the words which I quoted this morning, we may be each also 'clean meat to his neighbour,'—we may feed by faith on one another,—looking beyond the mere outward expressions of our fellow-men, in word or in act, to the source from which they spring, to the inward Divine Teacher of whom they witness. For the same Living Word is the Life and Light of men, and speaks, and shines, and is the source of living power, within the heart of every one of us, of every one of us the brethren of Christ, of every one of the whole family of man; so that all *our* tenderness to one another, all *our* love and pity for the fallen and outcast, all *our* readiness to forgive the penitent, our sympathy with the good and loving, our admiration for the brave and the true, are also witnesses of God's Love to us all, manifestations to each other of the loving Spirit of our Father in Heaven—'Christ in us'—God in Man—the 'hope of Glory.'

But, though the ancient Fathers knew so well how to give the true explanation of these words, they did not always adhere to it; and Jerome, as you have heard, while he says that 'more truly' this is their proper meaning, yet adds that they may be 'understood also in a mystical sense.' In other words, he would understand them also as referring to the Holy Communion, with which directly they have no connexion whatever, any more than those words in the 3rd chapter of St John, in our Lord's answer to Nicodemus, have any direct connexion with the Sacrament of Holy Baptism. Our Lord there says, 'Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.' It is plain that he there means to refer symbolically, under the figure of water, to the cleansing

operation of the Spirit of God, and not to the mere element of water to be used in baptism,—just as in the 6th chapter he refers symbolically, under the figure of eating his flesh and blood, to the nourishment afforded to the soul by his doctrine,—and just exactly as John the Baptist speaks of the Christ himself 'baptizing with the Holy Ghost and with *fire*.' This appears from the fact that he immediately drops all mention of the 'water,' and goes on to speak of those that are 'born of the Spirit.' And, in point of fact, as I showed on a former Sunday, neither our Lord nor any of his Apostles appears to have laid such stress on the mere act of baptism as later ages have ascribed to it. It is true we read in Mark xvi.16, as from the mouth of Jesus himself, 'He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, and he that believeth not shall be damned.' Even here it is not said, 'He that is *not baptized* shall be damned,' as so many of the Fathers laid it down. But the fact is, that the last twelve verses of this Gospel are notoriously a later addition to the original Gospel,—that being itself a 'compilation.' Thus Dean Alford speaks of this section as being—

> an *authentic* addition to the narrative, but of a compendious and supplementary character, and bearing traces of *another hand* from that which has shaped the diction and construction of the rest of the Gospel. . . . Internal evidence is, I think, very weighty against Mark's being its author. No less than seventeen words and expressions occur in it (and some of them several times), which are never elsewhere used by Mark, whose adherence to his own peculiar phrases is remarkable.

Dr C. Wordsworth, indeed, observes, *Greek Testament*, p. 128 :—

> So great a change as that wrought by the *Resurrection* of Christ might suggest to Mark a reason for change of style [!], as in music changes are made to mark changes in action or feeling [!].

But the present Archbishop (Thomson) of York says, *Dict. of the Bible*, ii.239 : —

> The passage is rejected by the majority of modern

> critics, on the testimony of manuscripts and of old writers, and on the internal evidence of the diction.

And he expresses his own opinion to the effect that—

> *it is probable that this section is from a different hand,* and was annexed to the Gospel soon after the time of the Apostles.

It was added then *after* the Apostolic time—'soon after,' says the Archbishop, but *how* soon he cannot say: only this we know that it is first quoted by Irenæus, who died in the year A.D.202. Still the Fathers would have been justified—as our Church is justified—in recognizing this passage, in our Lord's address to Nicodemus, as bearing *indirectly* on the question of baptism. For the water of baptism was a sign of that heavenly washing by the Spirit of God, which the words of Christ assure to all true believers: and that assurance, we believe, our Father in heaven will certainly confirm, and will not withhold the gracious gift of his Holy Spirit from them that ask him. In bringing, then, our children to Holy Baptism, we 'set to our seal' that God is true, who by the lips of the Son of Man has spoken such exceeding great and precious promises, to cheer and strengthen the hearts of his children. We regard this sacred rite, which Christ himself has instituted, as a token and pledge that God's Faithfulness and Love will never fail us,—that He who begins the good work in us, and sows by His Spirit within the heart of each of us the seed of Eternal Life, will complete it also in His Wisdom and Goodness,—that by the cleansing operation of His Spirit, as by water, or, if need be, by its more terrible operation, as by fire, burning up the filth and 'stubble,' which through years of sinful sloth and self-indulgence we have suffered to gather within the heart, 'defiling the temple of God,'—by visitations of His Grace, or else by manifestations of His Divine Displeasure,—by joy or grief, by blessing or chastisement,—He will train up His children for Himself.

And in like manner the old Fathers would have been justified—as our Church is justified—in applying the expressions of the 6th chapter of St John, about 'eating the flesh and drinking the blood of Christ,' *indirectly* to the

act of faith which we perform in coming to the other Sacrament—in speaking of our 'eating spiritually the flesh of Christ and drinking his blood,' when we come to the Holy Table,—in praying that we may 'so eat the flesh of the dear Son of God, Jesus Christ, and drink his blood, that our sinful bodies may be made clean by his body, and our souls washed through his most precious blood,'—provided only that it be remembered that these expressions are symbolical language, adopted from the words of Christ himself in the chapter before us,the true meaning of which, as the Fathers almost with one voice declare, is to feed upon Christ's word, to receive his discourses, to imbibe his teaching. We may do this at all times, feeding, as it were, on different portions of the body of Divine Truth which he has taught us. But, in this particular act of Holy Communion, we 'show forth his death,'—we specially make mention (according to his own command on the night before he suffered) of the faithfulness with which he sealed the work of his life in death,—sealed his testimony to the Truth, and to the Love of God to Man, of his Father and our Father, of his God and our God,—sealed his right to be acknowledged as our Saviour and Lord.

This fact, that there is no direct reference in the words of John vi. to the Holy Communion, is abundantly admitted by very high authorities in our own Church, from which I quoted freely, eight years ago, when preaching on this subject in this place. I then warned my hearers against interpreting these words, as some have done, exclusively of the Holy Eucharist, and connecting in consequence a superstitious fancy with that reverence which is justly due to that Holy Sacrament,—as if in fact it had been said, not 'except you eat the flesh of the Son of Man,' but 'Except you receive the Sacrament, you have no life in you.' I reminded them that the Sacraments are seals and pledges of God's Love to us, as well as actual means of grace; so that every time we see an infant baptized, or partake ourselves of the Lord's Supper, we have a sign and an assurance given, that not at such moments only, but at all times, each faithful soul may be drawing life from the doctrine of Christ, may be feeding upon the Living Bread, may be eating the flesh of the Son of Man and drinking his blood. Above all, I charged them to remember that the

spiritual food, which they might then hope to receive at the Holy Table, was precisely *the same in kind* as that which they might daily and hourly receive, if they were living the life of true Christians. I said,—

> Be sure that in this way, whether you are able to approach the Sacrament or not, you can still have life —the life of God—within you. Be sure that thus, though by God's Providence you may be removed far from the means of grace and the minister, you can still 'eat the flesh and drink the blood' of Christ your Lord to your soul's health, as really and truly, and in the very same kind of way, as when you set forth his death at the Holy Table.

And I then produced, in support of my teaching, the language of many eminent writers of our own Church, such as the following. Dr Waterland, one of the greatest authorities of the Church of England on the subject of the Holy Eucharist, writes thus:—

> 'If any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever.' 'Whoso eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood, hath Eternal Life.' 'Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you.' The sum is—*All*, that feed upon what is here mentioned, have life, and *all*, that do not feed thereupon, have no life. Hence arises an argument *against interpreting the words of sacramental feeding in the Eucharist.* For it is not true that all who receive the Communion have life, unless we put in the restriction of *worthy* or *so far*. Much less can it be true that all, who never have received, or never shall receive, have not life; unless we make several more restrictions, confining the proposition to persons living *since* the time of the institution, and persons *capable*, and not destitute of *opportunity*; making exceptions for good men of *old*, and for *infants*, and for many who have been, or may be, *invincibly ignorant*, or *might never have it in their power* to receive the communion or to know anything of it.
>
> They who judge that the Fathers in general, or almost universally, do interpret John vi. to the Eucharist, appear not to distinguish between *interpreting* and

applying. It was right to *apply* the *general* doctrine of John vi. to the *particular* case of the Eucharist, considered as worthily received; because the spiritual feeding there mentioned is the thing signified in the Eucharist and performed likewise.

I shall only add here that we do not *confine* God's grace to the Sacraments, neither do we assert any *peculiar* grace as *appropriate* to them only.

Archbishop Cranmer says:—

> Who ever said or taught before this time that the *Sacrament* was the cause why Christ said, 'If we eat not the flesh of the Son of Man, we have no life in us?' The spiritual eating of his flesh and drinking of his blood by faith . . . . this is the cause wherefore Christ said, 'If we eat not his flesh and drink not his blood, we have not life in us,' and 'If we eat his flesh and drink his blood, we have everlasting life.' And, if Christ had never ordained the Sacrament, yet should we have eaten his flesh and drunken his blood, and have had thereby Everlasting Life, as all the faithful did before the Sacrament was ordained, and do daily, when they receive not the Sacrament.

Bishop Jeremy Taylor says:—

> As Christ is eaten by faith *out* of the Sacrament, so is he also *in* the Sacrament. As he is real and spiritual meat to the worthy *hearer*, so is he to the worthy communicant. As Christ's flesh is life to all that *obey* him, so to all that *obediently remember* him. So Christ's flesh is meat indeed, however it be taken, if it be taken spiritually.

And he gives this advice to the communicant:—

> After the solemnity is done, let Christ dwell in your hearts by faith, and love, and obedience, and conformity to his life and death. . . . . And, therefore, when you are to do an action, consider how Christ did, or would do, the like; and do you imitate his example, and transcribe his copy, and understand all his commandments, and choose all that he propounded, and desire his promises, and fear his threatenings,

and marry his loves and hatreds, and contract his friendships. *For then do you every day communicate.*

Archbishop Sharpe observes that to 'eat Christ's flesh' and to 'drink his blood' means no more than to '*believe in Him*,'—to believe in his doctrine—to obey his word. For to both of these the same promise is made in the same words :—

'Whoso eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood hath Everlasting Life, and I will raise him up at the last day,'—

'This is the Will of Him that sent me, that whoso seeth the Son, and believeth in him, may have Everlasting Life, and I will raise him up at the last day.'

Dr Fulke says :—

This place, John vi.53, proveth invincibly that the flesh of Christ is truly eaten *without* the Sacrament, therefore spiritually,—*as well without it, as in it.* For else all, that die without participation of the Sacrament, should be void of Eternal Life.

And so, lastly, writes Bishop Beveridge :—

Our Saviour said these words at the least a year before the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper was instituted; and it is very unlikely that he should preach of that Sacrament before it was instituted. To which we may add that our Saviour here saith, 'Except you eat the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you.' Whereas it is manifest that a man may be deprived of the sacramental bread and wine, and yet have life in him: for otherwise all that die before they receive the Sacrament must of necessity be damned.

But I need not tell you that there are not a few in this day who go farther—much farther—than this reasonable view, and are bringing back upon the Church of England the Sacramental System, so dear to the Nicene Fathers,—that system of which the keynote is the mysterious efficacy of the priestly power, without which one Sacrament at least cannot be administered. I desire to guard you against this superstition, and to invite you to come to the

Holy Communion in the true spirit of disciples of Christ. I would have you come with reverence still, because you are coming to present yourselves specially before the Presence of God, in order that you may feed by faith on the message of life declared in Christ's Gospel,—may glorify your Heavenly Father for His Love displayed in it, —may rejoice in the thought that, as in Baptism, so also in the Holy Communion, you are witnessing *for* the Love of God to all your fellow-men, and not excluding those, who share not our full blessings, from all participation in His Fatherly Goodness, and in His Gift of spiritual life,— may dedicate yourselves anew to Him, as your Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier, the rightful owner of all your powers, the rightful Lord of all your being, confessing your past unworthiness, seeking grace to forsake what you know to be evil in his sight, and devote yourselves again, with fresh hopes, for the future. I would have you come then with reverence still, with all earnestness of faith and love, to that Holy Feast,—but not with the mistaken feelings of dread, and even terror, with which some in our day approach this Sacrament, misled, no doubt, by the extravagant language, which many of the Nicene Fathers have used in reference to it, like that which, as I have shown you lately, they employed about the other Sacrament.

In the first age of the Church, the rite was very simple and beautiful, as instituted by our Lord himself: 'Do this in remembrance of me'—in remembrance of my love, poured out upon you in life, and now to be sealed in death —in remembrance of that Truth which I have taught you, the tidings of your Heavenly Father's Love, for ministering which to you and yours and to all mankind I am now ready to suffer even unto death. Let this bread remind you of my body which is broken, and this wine of my blood poured out, for you. Accordingly, in the earliest time, as we learn from the Acts and the Epistles, the first Christians practised this simple rite 'in remembrance of' their Lord: 'ye do show forth,' says St Paul, 'the Lord's death *till he come*,'—the expectation having been then very strong in the Church, and in the minds of the Apostles themselves, as I have shown on a former occasion, that that 'coming' of Christ was very near at hand,—that there would be some then living, who would be still 'alive and

remaining' at his appearing. At the ordinary meal, it would seem, they 'broke the bread,' in solemn memory of him who was taken from them; and the one loaf, which they divided among those present, was a symbol, as St Paul says, of their mutual relation to each other, of their common brotherhood,—that they 'being many' were 'one body,' as they were 'all partakers of that one bread.' Thus the common meal, which the early Christians shared together, seems to have been used habitually as a time for 'remembering' their Lord, whom they expected soon to appear again among them; as where we read that—

> 'they continued steadfastly in the Apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in *breaking of bread* and in prayers,'—

and again that—

> 'they, continuing daily in the temple, and *breaking bread* from house to house, did eat their food with gladness and singleness of heart, praising God and having favour with all the people.' Acts ii.42-47.

Soon, however, these social meals, where Christians of different households met together, became abused for purposes of gluttony and drunkenness, and corrupted with acts of licentiousness. St Paul reproves severely his Corinthian converts for their laxity of practice in this respect, and tells them that they profaned the sacred rite. By breaking the bread and pouring the wine, they set forth indeed the death of Christ; but they did it in such a way, with such shameful indifference and irreverence, that they made themselves 'guilty' of it; they treated it lightly, and showed that they cared in reality little or nothing about it. And so they became partakers of the guilt of those who actually slew him; they 'ate and drank judgment to themselves, not discerning the Lord's Body,' not appreciating the solemn nature of the act, in which they commemorated that broken body and poured-out blood.

Such, then, were the 'love-feasts' of these early Christians, of which we read little elsewhere in Scripture; but then, as here, what is said of them betrays the loose and irreverent way in which the feast was too often celebrated —'These are spots,' says St Jude, 'in your love-feasts, when they feast with you, feeding themselves without fear.' It is certainly remarkable that so little is said in

the New Testament about the Communion, compared with the very prominent place which it fills in the teaching of the Nicene and later ages. But this, at all events, is noticeable, that no stress whatever is laid by St Paul upon the office of the *minister* in respect of it, if there was in his time (as most probably there was) an officiating presbyter —*presbyter*, I say, not *priest*, for neither the name nor the office of priest is met with anywhere in the New Testament applied to a minister under the Gospel, and our own word 'priest' is merely the corruption of 'presbyter' or elder. For the Apostle speaks of the whole body of the communicants 'blessing' the wine and 'breaking' the bread—

> 'The cup of blessing which *we* bless, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? The bread which *we* break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? For as there is one bread, so *we* being many are one body; for *we* are *all* partakers of that one bread.'

If, therefore, a minister was present, and would in that case naturally preside on such an occasion, yet he must have acted in those early days only as an 'elder,' chosen for age or purity of character or other qualities to represent the rest, as spokesman or rather as servant of the congregation, not as their lord and arbiter.

But by-and-by that corrupt ascetic system, which has been the fruitful source of such enormous evils in the Church, began to develope itself, and work out its natural consequences. Even St Paul saw reason to warn Timothy, his son in the faith, that the time would come when some would depart from the faith, 'giving heed to seducing spirits,' that is, to misleading teachers, one characteristic of whose errors would be the 'forbidding to marry.' We know that the law laid down by St Paul was that the clergy, as a rule, should be married men. But as one has truly written *:—

> From a very early time, and more and more so every year, onward to the Nicene age, the clergy were striving to reverse this rule; and in the fourth century the temper and habits of the clerical body were entirely

* Isaac Taylor, *Ancient Christianity*, p.397-402.

governed by the ascetic doctrine, and the majority were actually unmarried men. . . . . The ascetic error did not consist in a denial or exclusion of what is moral, spiritual, and real, but in thrusting forward, and in making too much of, what is visible, formal, and accidental. Holiness and purity were not denied; but virginity and bodily purity were chiefly talked of, and were regarded as if they implied and conveyed, and were equivalents of, genuine moral qualities. . . . But now what was the sacramental doctrine of the very same men? It was not a denial of grace, and of the spiritual realities of the Christian life, but a putting foremost, and a talking most, of the rite *as a rite*. The very men, who were accustomed to use the words sanctity and virginity, continence and celibacy, as synonymous terms, or as equivalents, did also constantly speak of Baptism and of the Eucharist as intrinsically holy, and as conveying holiness; or at the best they so held up these rites before the people, as to lead them to pay a superstitious and fatally exclusive regard to the ceremony, while moral and spiritual qualities or states of the heart were lost sight of. The sacramental and ascetic doctrines were, however, connected by yet another link. It was the ascetics exclusively, or nearly so, who pretended to miraculous powers, and it was they too who were the dealers with the demon legions. . . . . In other words, monks and hermits, and men forced by wild notions of religion from off the paths of humanity, such will feed upon wonders. . . . . It cannot be imagined that men, breathing the stifling atmosphere of religious houses, and ever gaping for miracles,—seeing visions, hearing voices, encountering legions of demons,—should be contented to rest in a ritual purely spiritual and rational, and which secured edification by the Divine blessing upon the use of ordinary means of instruction and persuasion. No such rule of sobriety and simplicity could satisfy men who, instead of coming from their homes to church, and of returning from church to their homes, issued from cloisters and returned to cloisters. The sacramental miracles, which blaze on the pages of Chrysostom,—the 'terrible

> mysteries,' which archangels dared not look upon,—are the awful rites of a religion, whose ministers (the serious and sincere among them) have been wrought up into an habitual sombre frenzy, and to whom nothing is real but the unreal.
>
> But further, the sacramental doctrine and practice of the Nicene and of the Ante-Nicene Church had a special ecclesiastical import, which offers itself to the eye of every impartial inquirer. . . . . The clergy had a cumbrous engine to work; and, to keep it in order, they availed themselves of every means which they found would take effect upon it. Hence the mysterious terrors, wherewith the eucharistic rite was enveloped. Minds, hardened against the genuine motives of the Gospel, might yet be overawed by the terrors of the eucharistic ceremonial, and might be made to tremble by the threat of being driven from the altar. One cannot read those overwrought passages, in which the great Nicene preachers are labouring to invest the celebration of the mysteries with terrors,—even with horrors,—and not feel that there was an unconfessed motive, a secret necessity, a latent reason of government, at the bottom of all this astounding rhetoric. The Apostles were accustomed to speak in no such style of the 'breaking of bread'; no! for the Apostles had no convents and monasteries to manage.

'Breaking of bread' is all that we hear of in the Acts of the Apostles. In the writings of the Nicene Fathers we read of an 'immolation,' a 'terrible mystery,' a 'sacrifice,' a 'breaking,' 'rending,' 'mastication,' not of bread, but 'of the body of Christ,'—not figuratively, of his doctrine by faith, but literally of his actual body. The eucharist is called 'the dreadful sacrifice,' the altar the 'horrific table,' the cup of blessing is styled 'tremendous, most dreadful.' But here are some of Chrysostom's actual words:—

> What! the mystic Table has been prepared! the Lamb of God for thee is slaughtered! the priest for thee contends! the spiritual fire from the sacred Table ascends! while the cherubim, holding their stations round about,—while the seraphim hovering

around, and the six-winged veiling their faces,—while all the incorporeal orders,—along with the priest, for thee are interceding! The spiritual fire descends; and, for thy purification, the blood from the spotless side is emptied into the cup; and thou, dost thou neither tremble nor blush to be found false at this dread hour? A hundred and sixty-eight hours there are in the week, and one only of these has God set apart for Himself; and this one dost thou devour in worldly business, in merriment, or in anything that may chance to come in thy way? With what assurance, then, canst thou ever again approach the mysteries? with a conscience how defiled? Wouldst thou dare, with dung in thy hands, to touch the skirts of an earthly monarch? Far from it. Not as bread shouldst thou look upon that, nor esteem that other as wine; for not like other nourishment do these descend. Far be it! think no such thing! For just as wax, held to the fire, suffers no detriment as to its substance, although melted all away, in like manner hold it to be true that the substance of the mysteries is absorbed wholly by the body of him who partakes. Wherefore, when ye approach, think not that ye receive the Divine Body as from the hand of man, but rather as was the fire from the tongs of the very seraphim given to Isaiah.

To come back from these expressions and practices, to the language of the New Testament and the practice of the Apostles, is like coming out of the close and steaming atmosphere of a heated stove-room, to breathe the fresh pure air and enjoy the bright clear light of day. 'Do this in remembrance of me!' 'Ye do show forth the Lord's death till he come!'

Let us come in this spirit to the Holy Table, 'showing forth' that 'death,' by which our Lord finished and sealed his work on earth of preaching to us the message of life, and has taught us also the duty of sacrificing all, even life itself, if need be, for the Truth's sake,—doing this in remembrance of that good Shepherd, who loved the sheep, and laid down his own life in ministering to theirs, that 'they might have life, and might have it more abundantly'

—and feeding there by faith upon the living words of Christ, 'which shall not pass away,'—in which we 'have Eternal Life,'—'eating the flesh, and drinking the blood, of the Son of Man.'

And let us remember also, that we cannot avoid the responsibility of feeding on this Living Bread, by abstaining altogether from coming to the Holy Table. For we incur it whenever we hear the Living Word, and His Voice reaches the heart, and comes home to the conscience, and the call is made upon us by the Divine Lord of the soul to receive and obey that Truth which we hear. Then will it be seen whether we are true living men, true disciples of Christ, true children of God, or not,—when the 'flesh and blood of Christ is poured into our ears,' as St Jerome says, and we either devoutly feed on this spiritual food, eating and drinking Eternal Life, or lightly heed and disregard it.

But so, too, neither can we be deprived of this privilege by any circumstances of our own position, or by any acts of our fellow-men. We may be living, more especially in a country like this, far away from the appointed minister and the means of grace. But, if we feed by faith on the Living Word of God,—if the Spirit of Christ dwells in our hearts, 'by faith, and love, and obedience, and conformity to his life and death,'—then, as Bishop Jeremy Taylor says, 'we do every day communicate,' and no earthly circumstances, no earthly power, can deprive us of this. Once the three Bishops of Lincoln, Gloucester, and Bristol, as good old John Foxe tells us,—

> did adjudge and condemn the said Nicholas Ridley as an heretic, and so adjudged him presently, both by word and also in deed, to be degraded from the degree of a Bishop, from priesthood, and all ecclesiastical orders, declaring moreover the said Nicholas Ridley to be no member of the Church, and further excommunicating him with the greater excommunication.

This they did because he had refused to recant, revoke his errors, and turn to the Catholic Church,—

> to revoke his heretical assertions, and submit himself to the determination of the Church,—

though adjured repeatedly 'for the love of God' to do so. 'And indeed,' said one of his three ecclesiastical judges—

> except we do constitute the Church our foundation, stay, and judge, we can have no end of controversies, no end of disputations. It remains therefore that we submit ourselves to the determination of the Church, with whom God promised to remain to the world's end, to whom He promised to send the Holy Ghost which should teach it the truth.

But when all this was done, who doubts for a moment that in that prison cell, at that fiery stake, though blasphemously cut off from the 'Church of God,' and given over to the devil, that holy martyr communicated daily in spirit with the 'Church of the Living God,' with the spirits of the just made perfect, with the spirits of the faithful and true-hearted in every age,—that he was fed daily with the living bread and the living water, 'eating the flesh and drinking the blood' of the Son of Man, and receiving abundantly, according to his need, supplies of Eternal Life, from his faithful and compassionate Creator, his 'Master and Lord God,' whose 'known truth,' he said, 'he would never deny?'

XV.

THE SABBATH.

PREACHED ON SUNDAY MORNING, JAN. 28, 1866, IN THE CATHEDRAL, MARITZBURG.

MARK II. 27.

'AND HE SAID UNTO THEM, THE SABBATH WAS MADE FOR MAN, AND NOT MAN FOR THE SABBATH.'

YOU may remember that in the first Lesson of last Sunday Evening's Service, the following words occurred, which perhaps struck forcibly the attention of some among you as you heard them:—'Blessed is the man that doeth this, and the son of man that layeth hold on it, that keepeth the sabbath from polluting it, and keepeth his hand from doing any evil,' Is.lvi.2. Here 'the keeping of the sabbath' is evidently put on the very same footing as 'keeping the hand from doing any evil:' and so elsewhere the same Prophet writes, lviii.13,14—

> If thou turn away thy foot from the sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on my holy day, and call the sabbath a delight, the holy of the Lord, honourable, and shalt honour Him, not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words,—then shalt thou delight thyself in the Lord, and I will cause thee to ride upon the high places of the earth, and feed thee with the heritage of Jacob thy father: for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it.

Here, then, is expressed the feeling of devout men in Israel at the time when the Prophet lived—the '*later* Isaiah,' the writer of the last twenty-seven chapters of

the present Book of Isaiah,—two centuries or more after the age of the *older* Isaiah of Hezekiah's time, to whom the rest of the Book belongs. For that this later 'unknown Prophet,'—whose writings have been appended to those of the older Prophet, by certain Jewish Rabbis, themselves also utterly unknown to us, upon whose authority we have received the present canonical books of the Old Testament,—lived *after* the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple by Nebuchadnezzar, appears plainly enough from such passages as these:—

> 'Thy holy cities are a wilderness, Zion is a wilderness, Jerusalem a desolation. Our holy and our beautiful House, where our fathers praised Thee, is burned up with fire, and all our pleasant things are laid waste.' lxiv.10,11.
>
> The people of Thy holiness have possessed but a little while: our adversaries have trodden down Thy Sanctuary. lxiii.18.

On the supposition, that every line and letter of Scripture is to be regarded as the Word of God, infallibly and eternally true, it is impossible, I think, to deny that such passages as those which I have just quoted, which lay very great stress on the observance of the sabbath, must be binding to a certain extent upon all of us,—that, if they are not binding upon all mankind, since all have not heard the divine message, and the command was originally given to the Jews, yet to some extent they must lay a weight of responsibility on the consciences of all, who have once been made aware of such clear indications of the Divine Will. And this would be confirmed by finding the observance of the sabbath ranked in the Decalogue itself with other duties, which are plainly of the highest religious and moral obligation. And, accordingly, our Church orders the Ten Commandments to be read in the Ante-Communion Service, and Sunday after Sunday these words are uttered with solemn emphasis, in the ears of tens of thousands of devout worshippers;—

> 'God spake these words and said, Remember that thou keep holy the Sabbath-Day.'

I can hardly doubt that to many of you this subject has been at times a source of great perplexity. Some may

even have been brought up in that strict system of the Presbyterian Church of Scotland, which lays down the law in its 'Shorter Catechism,' that—

> The sabbath is to be sanctified by a holy resting *all that day* even from such worldly employments and recreations as are lawful on other days, and spending *the whole time* in the public and private exercises of God's worship, except so much as is to be taken up in the works of necessity and mercy;

and it goes on to declare that—

> The Fourth Commandment forbiddeth the omission or careless performance of the duties required, and the profaning the day by idleness, or doing that which is in itself sinful, or by unnecessary thoughts, words, or works, about our worldly employments or recreations.

Nay, in that Church a Decree was passed so lately as June 7, 1709, in the following terms:—

> The General Meetings of the Kirk-Sessions of Edinburgh, taking to their serious consideration that the Lord's Day is *profaned*, by people's *standing in the streets*, and *vaging* [strolling] *to fields and gardens and to the Castle-hill*, as also by *standing idle gazing out of windows* . . . . and finding that there are divers acts of the Town-Council of this City and General Sessions, for preventing the profanation of the Lord's Day, according to the Acts of Parliament and General Assembly; therefore the General Sessions do resolve to see to the execution of these good Acts. . . . and do seriously exhort parents and masters of families, *to keep their children and servants within doors upon that holy day*, and to take care that all belonging to them do sanctify the same, and punctually attend the public worship of God; with notification that notice will be taken of such as shall be found transgressing in the premises, and they called before the Kirk-Session and censured for the same, and, if they do not amend, they will be referred to the civil magistrate to be punished.

It has been well observed* that—

> If these inquisitors had been in authority at Jerusalem when our Lord Jesus Christ 'vaged' through the corn-fields on the Sabbath, they undoubtedly would not only have accused his disciples, as the Pharisees did, of profaning the sacred day by plucking the ears of corn and rubbing them in their hands, but would have outdone that most strict of Jewish sects, by denouncing both him and his followers as Sabbath-breakers, on the score of the 'vaging' itself.

The 'Act of the General Assembly,' to which this document especially refers, was probably that passed in 1705, 'against the Profanation of the Lord's Day,' wherein 'taking into their serious consideration the great frequency of the offence,—

> by multitudes of people *walking idly upon the streets of the city of Edinburgh, the Pier and Shore of Leith, in St Ann's Yards and the Queen's Park.* . . . and being deeply sensible of *the great dishonour done to the Holy God*, and of the open contempt of God and Man manifested by such *heaven-daring profaneness*, to the exposing of the nation to the heaviest judgments,—therefore they do in the fear of God earnestly exhort all the reverend brethren, &c., to contribute their utmost endeavours in their stations for suppressing such *gross profanation of the Lord's Day*, by a vigorous and impartial, yet prudent, exercise of the discipline of the Church.

Most of you, however, will, no doubt, have been accustomed to breathe the freer air of the Church of England, which, though it enjoins the reading of the Fourth Commandment continually in the ears of the people, and puts the prayer into their mouths, with reference to this command as well as the rest—'Lord, have mercy upon us, and incline our hearts to keep *this law*,'—and again, 'Lord, have mercy upon us, and write *all these Thy laws* in our hearts, we beseech Thee'—yet in the summary in the Catechism, of what we 'chiefly learn by these Commandments,' makes no mention whatever of sanctifying

* R. Cox, *Sabbath Laws and Sabbath Duties*, p.150.

the sabbath, speaks of our duty to 'honour God's holy Name and His Word,' but says nothing of honouring His holy *day*.

Yet still there stands the Commandment before us continually; and week after week its words are repeated in our hearing, as solemnly as those which say, 'Thou shalt have none other Gods but Me'—'Thou shalt do no murder'—'Thou shalt not commit adultery.' And we know, in fact, that very many of our English fellow-Christians are greatly impressed with the duty of observing, in some way or other, this command as well as the rest. They may have acquiesced so far in the habits of modern times, as no longer to keep, with many of the early Christians, the Jewish Sabbath still,—for, as Neander says, *Ch. Hist.* iii.421,—

> In several of the Eastern Churches the Sabbath was celebrated nearly after the same manner as Sunday. Church assemblies were held, sermons delivered, and the communion celebrated on this day. And in the 'Apostolic Constitutions' the Sabbath is particularly mentioned, along with Sunday, as a day for the assembling together of the Church; and it was ordered that on the Sabbath and on Sunday the slaves should rest from their labours, and attend Church with the rest to hear the sermon.

At this very day in the Highlands of Ethiopia there is a so-called Christian Kingdom, dating back from a very early age, where both days are kept in the same manner and with equal strictness, the seventh day and the first, the Sabbath of the Jews and the Lord's Day of the Christians. And in the mountains of Armenia, we find another Church, the Nestorian, in which, as a modern traveller says,—

> The Sabbath is regarded with a sacredness among the mountain tribes, which I have seen among no other Christians of the East. I have repeatedly been told by Nestorians of the plain, that their brethren in the mountains would immediately kill a man, for travelling or labouring on the Sabbath; and there is abundant reason to believe that this was formerly done, though it has ceased since the people have become

acquainted with the practice of Christendom on the subject.*

But the most rigid observers of the Sabbath in our days will probably have satisfied their consciences on this point, that they are somehow justified in abandoning the seventh day of the week, once enjoined upon the Jews by divine authority to be kept as the Sabbath, and transferring their allegiance from the *seventh* to the *first* day, the Christian Sunday. But then they regard this day, the Sunday, as virtually enforced by the same Divine authority, and coming under the sanction of the Fourth Commandment, pronounced amidst the thunders of Sinai, which they regard as requiring the hallowing of *one day in seven*. And we know with what painful strictness this view of the Sunday has been carried out in many excellent families, often with the most serious detriment to the religious life of the children; while the general effect upon ordinary persons, of the graver and more decent sort, though not themselves professing to be more especially religious, has been truly and painfully described by the late Mr Wilberforce (*Practical View of Christianity*, iv.2) as follows:—

> The Sunday is, to say the best of it, a *heavy* day; and that larger part of it, which is not claimed by the public offices of the Church, dully draws on in comfortless vacuity, or, without improvement, is trifled away in vain and unprofitable discourse . . . . How little do many seem to enter into the *spirit* of the institution, who are not wholly inattentive to its exterior decorums! How glad are they to qualify the rigour of their religious labours! How hardly do they plead against being compelled to devote the *whole* of the day to religion, claiming to themselves no small merit for giving up to it a part, and purchasing, therefore, as they hope, a right to spend the remainder more agreeably! . . . . Even business itself is recreation compared to religion; and, from the drudgery of this day of sacred rest, they fly for relief to their ordinary occupations.

It is my duty, as a Minister of the Church of England,

* Prof. Baden Powell, *Christianity without Judaism*, p.225-6.

to read in your ears from time to time the Ten Commandments, beginning with the statement, 'God spake these words.' I have already said, in the preface to the Third Part of my work on the Pentateuch, in reply to my brother Bishops,—who called upon me to resign my office, assuming that I was unable to make use of certain formularies of the Church, because they contained statements which the researches of Modern Science have shown to be unhistorical,—that, while I thought that many would be pained to be required to use such expressions, and I hoped that in due time they would be modified by the authority of Parliament, yet I was content to use them myself, provided that I had perfect liberty to explain to my people in what sense I used them,—provided that I allowed nothing to hinder me from setting plainly before my hearers the truth on all points, as God had enabled me to see it, and as my sense of duty to the Truth itself, and to the needs of my congregation, required me to publish it. I desire, therefore, to explain to you to-day and next Sunday in what sense I read these Ten Commandments,—in what sense I hold that God really *has* 'spoken' to us in reference to this Fourth Commandment, as well as the rest,—in what sense, I think, a certain obligation *is* laid upon us by a Divine authority,—though very different from that which is generally appealed to in the case,—to keep the Sunday as a day of joyful rest and refreshment for body and soul.

And I do this, not merely to exhibit a very real and practical light, in which you and I may regard this duty, but also in the hope of lending some help, however small, towards beating down one of the most crying evils of the present day,—I mean, that remnant of Judaism, that sabbatarian superstition, which is still suffered, even in our own England, to impede so seriously the progress of the physical, moral, and religious welfare of the whole community. Here in Natal, no doubt, we have very little of this,—probably, no Sunday restrictions, which are not really desirable for the general happiness. But in Scotland, as you have heard, Acts were passed by the Church Authorities of former days, for strictly confining the whole population of Edinburgh, men, women, and children, to their houses on Sunday, except in going to and returning from Church. Happy those who lived out of town so far,

that they had a 'sabbath-day's' walk to take, before they could reach their place of worship! But, as one has justly said (R. Cox, *Sabbath Laws*, &c., p.278),—

> Those who know the dark and filthy 'closes' of Edinburgh, as they are even in these days of sanitary reform, may judge how far the laws of health could be observed by persons confined all day with no better recreation than theological reading and Sunday 'tasks,' to dark, ill-aired houses, in localities so filthy. Above all, think of the imprisoned children, thus trained to glorify God, and to delight in His Service!—impatient wretches, deprived of the lively exercise to which Nature impels the young for their good, withdrawn from the solar light, so conducive to their healthy growth, and reduced by indigestion, ennui, discontent, and the horrors of the Catechism, to an extremity of peevishness and disobedience, which their tormented parents deplore as unquestionable symptoms of the corruption of human nature, brought into the world by the Fall, and of the evil instigations of the arch-enemy of mankind!

But this was a century and a half ago; and even in Scotland things are changed very much for the better since then. In England also, it is true, there are no laws which forbid 'vaging' on Sunday. The streets and parks of London are trodden that day, at their own free will, by multitudes, who rejoice for once to be freed from the cares of business, and to drink in fresh life, while they breathe a purer air, look up at an open sky, look around upon the trees, the grass, the flowers, the waters, the swarms of living beings as happy as themselves. But do we not know that most of those very same Bishops, who within the last three years signed the address to me, to which I have just referred, have also, within the very same period, addressed another circular letter to the Directors of the English Railway Companies, calling upon them to put a stop to the practice of sending out 'Excursion Trains' on Sundays,—seeking thus to debar their poorer brethren, who have no means of escaping from the crowded cities on the week-day, from any access, with their wives and families, to the blessings of the country, brought now within their reach by

God's good gift of railways, where they might feel the soothing influences of Nature, when perhaps the voice of the preacher may have failed to reach them? You may remember how one great poet (Southey) has written:—

> Go thou and seek the House of Prayer!
> I to the woodlands bend my way,
> And meet Religion there!
> She needs not haunt the high-arched dome to pray,
> Where storied windows dim the doubtful day;
> With Liberty she loves to rove
> Wide o'er the heathy hill or cowslip'd dale,
> Or seek the shelter of the embowering grove,
> Or with the streamlet wind along the vale.

And how another (Tennyson) has written:—

> And forth into the fields I went,
> And Nature's living motion lent
> The pulse of hope to discontent.
>
> I wondered at the bounteous hours,
> The slow result of winter showers;
> You scarce could see the grass for flowers.
>
> I wondered, while I paced along;
> The woods were filled so full of song,
> There seemed no room for sense of wrong.
>
> So variously seemed all things wrought,
> I marvelled how the mind was brought
> To anchor by one dismal thought;
>
> And wherefore rather I made choice
> To commune with that barren voice,
> Than him that said 'Rejoice! Rejoice!'

Our artizans, then, if the circular in question could have had its way, were to have been denied that refreshment for the overwrought body, that solace for the wearied mind, which the sight and taste of these pure joys of nature are, by God's own gracious ordinance, especially meant to give them. The rich might drive each day of the week along the green lanes, amidst the scented hay or the golden corn,—might hear 'the wild music of the wind-swept grove,'—might see—

> The noon-tide beam,
> Flashed from the broken stream,
> Quick vibrate on the dazzled sight—

or 'mark the billows burst in silver light.'

But the poor, on the only day on which they can, if they will, have a share in this enjoyment, which their Father's gracious care has abundantly provided for them,—a gift of this new time, a compensation, as it were, for some of the evils which our modern civilization has brought with it,—were to have been deprived of their rightful liberty, under the mistaken notion of promoting the due observance of Sunday! Happily, the Directors laid this unwise address quietly aside upon the shelf, and gave no reply to it.

But this is not the only way, in which the sabbatarian spirit still shows itself even at the present time in England. On Sundays, as you know, during the whole day, the British Museum—the people's own property—is still closed against them. At the Zoological Gardens, the members, who can afford to pay for the right of visiting them on Sunday, are allowed to do so; but the lower classes are effectually excluded. In Hyde Park and the Gardens adjoining, where tens of thousands of the poorer denizens of the great metropolis may be seen enjoying themselves on Sunday Afternoon,—taking possession, as it were, for a few short hours, of the ground which is occupied by the rich and their splendid equipages on a weekday, the music, with which they were once at their own expense enlivened, and so raised for a while out of the dull monotony of this careworn life, has been silenced, and the crowds must walk, and talk about ordinary matters, as best they can; they must not be allowed to hear the glorious harmonies of Handel or Haydn, Mozart or Beethoven, lest, while their ears should be entranced, their minds refreshed, their taste refined, the 'day of rest' should be 'profaned'!

In all these cases, it is a painful thing to know that some high authorities in the Church of England have taken a prominent part in opposing the liberal movement of the day towards the relaxation of these sabbatarian restrictions. But seventy years ago Bishop Horsley could write as follows, in a sermon (xxiii.) in which he sought to enforce the due observance of the Sunday:—

> An entire day is a longer space of time than the human mind can employ with alacrity upon any one subject. The austerity, therefore, of those is little to be commended who require that all the intervals of public wor-

> ship, and whatever remains of the day after the public duty is satisfied, should be spent in the closet, in private prayer, and retired meditation. Nor are all persons in the lower ranks of society to be very severely censured,—those especially who are confined to populous cities, where they breathe a noxious atmosphere, and are engaged in unwholesome occupations, from which, with their daily subsistence, they derive their daily poison,—if they take advantage from the leisure of the day to recruit their wasted strength and harassed spirits, by short excursions into the purer air of the adjacent villages, and the innocent recreations of sober society.

It is certainly not necessary or desirable to run into the opposite extreme, as Archbishop Laud did, when he persuaded Charles I. to republish his father's 'Book of Sports,' and *require all the clergy to read it to their congregations*, in which Book King James declared that—

> For his good people's lawful recreations, his pleasure was, that, after the end of Divine Service, they should not be disturbed, letted, or discouraged from any lawful recreations, such as dancing, either of men or women, archery for men, leaping, vaulting, or any such harmless recreations, nor from having of May-games, Whitsun-ales, or Morris-dances, and setting up of May-poles, or other sports therewith used, so as the same be had in due and convenient time, without impediment or let of Divine Service.

It was unwise and wrong to impose such an order as this upon the clergy,—to command them to read in their churches this Book, which many of them held in abhorrence. But the time is at hand, I trust, when the Heads of our Church, instead of attempting with feeble hand to stay the wave of progress, will devote themselves heartily to the true work, which especially falls to their lot in the present day, and, instead of desperately clinging to that which is untenable in the traditions of the past, will endeavour 'with just and firm hand,' to use the words of Mr Gladstone, which I have lately quoted, to 'sever the *transitory* from the *durable*, and the *accidental* from the *essential*, in old opinions,'—will come to rest the observance

of the Sunday on its true grounds, physical, social, moral, and religious, and not on the unsound, unreal, basis, on which not a few of our fellow-Christians are still resting it,—will see how the happy healthful freedom of the Sunday may be best enjoyed by the working classes, without sacrificing its religious blessings,—how the great works of human genius, the works of God-gifted men, and the wonders of creative wisdom, may be enjoyed in our Parks and Gardens, Museums and Galleries, without therefore emptying the House of God, or interfering with the proper rest of others,—how, if need be, as an eminent friend of the people once said to me, while gazing together, with deep human interest, upon the Sunday crowds, that listlessly paced along the silent sward, even the Music might have been turned to the account of Religion, and a programme laid down of sacred melodies, masses, and choruses, for the training and edification of the willing and delighted multitude.

XVI.

THE SABBATH.

PREACHED ON SUNDAY MORNING, FEB. 4, 1866, IN THE CATHEDRAL, MARITZBURG.

MARK II. 27.

'AND HE SAID UNTO THEM, 'THE SABBATH WAS MADE FOR MAN, AND NOT MAN FOR THE SABBATH.''

I NOW return to the consideration of the question, which we had before us last Sunday Morning, and our examination of which was interrupted by my unavoidable absence in the Evening. I spoke then of the rigour, with which the observance of the Fourth Commandment is still enforced by many,—not indeed so strictly, according to the letter, as the Command itself actually requires, which enjoins the keeping-holy of the *seventh* day of the week, not of the *first*,—but by a transference of the honour, supposed to be due formerly to the Jewish Sabbath, to the Christian Sunday,—the reverence paid to *one day in seven* being still based upon the law in the Decalogue, supposed to be Mosaic and Divine. I showed by certain evidences—what indeed is notorious—that in Scotland formerly, this Sabbatarian spirit greatly prevailed, and indeed is still very strong, even at the present day,—though not *so* strong as when, two centuries ago, it was ordered by the Town Council of Edinburgh, apparently with reference to Neh. xiii. 19, that—

> to the effect people may be restrained from vaging abroad upon the sabbath, none be suffered to come in or out at any of the ports of this burgh from the Saturday at night till the Monday at morning, nor be found vaging in the streets, or repairing to the Castle-

> hill of this burgh, under the pain of imprisonment, and farther punishment of their persons at the will of the magistrate,—

and when it was also ordered that the public wells should be closed on Sunday from 8 A.M. till noon, and from 1 P.M. to 5 P.M.—

> none to bring any greater vessels to the wells, for carrying of water, than a pint stoup or a pint bottle upon the Lord's day.—Cox's *Lit. of the Sabbath Question*, i.p.472.

That spirit is not so violent now as it was in still later times, when, in the words of a Minister of the Free Church (Rev. W. C. Smith), spoken in Edinburgh, Nov. 10, 1865, which have just reached us,—

> No street-lamps were allowed to be lighted on the darkest Sunday nights, because it was held that nobody had any right to be out of doors at such hours. The Assembly forbade any person taking a walk on the sabbath, or looking out of a window, and therefore all the blinds were pulled down; and there is great reason to fear that the spurious conscience thus created indemnified itself, for all the gnats it was forced to strain at, by swallowing a variety of camels. No one, who knows anything of those days, with their universal smuggling and universal lying, will place much reliance on the law of constraint which was substituted for the law of conscience.

But the same mail has brought us the testimony of an eminent Minister of the Established Church of Scotland,* with reference to the actual present state of the Sabbatarian question in Scotland. His words are of more weight, not only from his own personal character, and the fact of his being one of Her Majesty's chaplains, but also as having been addressed to a body of the clergy of his own Church, who however for the most past very strongly dissented from his principles. He first shows that though, professing to keep the Sunday strictly as a Sabbath, and solemnly enjoining their hearers to keep it, in obedience to the Fourth Commandment, they did not really do this themselves.

* Dr Norman McLeod, editor of 'Good Words,' in his speech at a special meeting of the Presbytery of Glasgow, on Nov. 16, 1865.

> We do not keep the day . . . . we do not attempt to keep it, even in regard to work. Our servants and our ministers all do what no person living under the Fourth Commandment would have dared to have done. This is simply a notorious fact. What effect has this? I think it has this effect, very strongly, of *weakening morality*. . . . . I think this course a most dangerous one. You are laying burdens upon the shoulders of the people that they cannot bear. You are training men up to one of the worst habits, that of believing in their consciences that a thing is wrong, and yet making it so that they are constrained to do it.

But besides this 'weakening of morality,'—this sense of a discrepancy between the doctrine solemnly taught from the pulpit, and the actual practice of the teacher himself, when a great *convenience* is treated by him as a *necessity*, as, for instance, in respect of using a railway on Sunday, in plain departure from the stricter principles which formerly prevailed,—this divine proceeds to speak of the direct evils, which have followed from the efforts still made to maintain the Sabbatarian system in the Church of Scotland.

> The Fourth Commandment has produced in our country notorious Judaism—Judaism of the worst description, for which I have no respect whatever. Look at the Judaism of the nineteenth century: look at it, for example, in some parts of our own country in the north. I challenge any Free Church Minister that he would dare to be seen using a razor and a brush on Sunday morning. He would not dare to do it. . . . . There is this slavery to the letter over a great part of the country. The clergy themselves have become slaves: they have forged their own chains, from which they cannot escape. They have done so, I think, with perfect honesty, drilling the people in the Fourth Commandment and its details, until they are now in a position from which they cannot emancipate themselves.
>
> But is this Judaism confined to different parts of the *country?* No: I think you see much of it in our own town. I grant you that there is freedom expressed

in the sentiments that have been uttered to-day, which people would not have dared to have uttered twenty years ago: but I think that this is owing in a great measure to the freedom in Church-matters of Christian laymen, who are not so bound as we are. Let us be thankful for it. But I think that there is a vast deal of what I am complaining of in our city of Glasgow. What can be more Judaical than the stringent rules that are sometimes laid down? You may go and hear the organ or any musical instrument in the *church;* yet you dare not use the same instrument in the house. Then again, in regard to 'walking on Sunday,' I ask you what sentiments with some prevail? I myself lately mentioned, in a speech about a north park for Glasgow, that I thought on Sunday evening the people might walk out. This was commented upon, and, I must say, what was uttered made me, I might almost say, tremble for the condition we are in in Scotland, and think that we are standing on the edge of a slippery precipice,—that consequences may ensue of which men are not aware, as a resistance against such ignorance and such cruelty. . . . What did the General Assembly itself dare to say, in a pastoral address within my own memory, in 1834, when it spoke of '*walking*' on Sunday, as 'an impious encroachment on one of the inalienable prerogatives of the Lord's Day'? That is what I call Judaism.

When a minister of the Scotch Kirk can speak thus freely in the ears of his brethren, it is a sign that a great change has passed already over the thoughts and feelings of that Church,—that light is beginning to break, upon this, as upon other subjects, on the eyes of intelligent Christians, in Scotland as well as in England.

And this is strongly confirmed by the language used on the same occasion by several of the clergy, whose views with regard to the authority, on which the sabbath is observed, differed entirely from those of this speaker. As a general rule, nothing could be better than the spirit and temper, in which these clergymen came to the discussion of the question. Instead of flinging fiery brands about them,—instead of charging their brother, though he swept

away entirely the binding authority of the Ten Commandments, in which they most solemnly believed, with being a 'heretic,' an 'unbeliever,' an 'infidel,' they delivered their protests against his opinions with the candour and the charity of Christian men; they acknowledged that their adversary, however mistaken they might deem him, was seeking with all his heart, as truly as themselves, the glory of God and the good of his fellow-men; and they have left a bright example in controversy, which might well be laid to heart by many even high in office in the Church, living south of the Tweed. But several of these clergy of the Church of Scotland expressed sentiments on this occasion, which shows that a great departure has already taken place in pious minds in that country from the rigidity of the old system.

Thus one said:—

> The municipal authorities of Glasgow, the responsible guardians of the working-classes, while they have of late years provided, in their spacious parks, a lounge during weekdays for the rich, have wisely and befittingly intended these also as an innocent resort for the working-man and his family, when the sabbath services of the day are over. And, if he be faithful in worshipping his God in the temple of Grace, I for one delight to see him quietly and decorously ending his summer-day in the vestibule of Nature.

Another said:—

> I am not here to forbid, even if I could forbid, and I am glad that I cannot, the hard-wrought mechanic to get away from the very sight of the smoky scenes of his daily toil, and to enjoy the air, and the sunlight, and the joy of the fair earth. I am glad to meet, as I often do, pale-faced men and women, with their children in their arms or toddling by their side, on a sabbath afternoon; for I know they are likely to go home more thankful, and cheerful, and good, than if they had been shut up all the day in some small apartment, opening off from a dirty common stair.

And a third observed:—

> One would suppose from the way he (Dr McLeod)

spoke, that the people were in such terror of the Fourth Commandment, that they dared not breathe the fresh air on sabbath evening,—that they were compelled to sit in their ill-ventilated houses, and not daring, from fear of this hated statute, to go to the door. There may have been a time when this was the case in Glasgow, and there may be some parts of the country in which this is the case still. But, if any one sees the Green on a sabbath evening, or the Dennistown suburb, or the West-End Park, he will see quite enough to satisfy him that the Fourth Commandment exercises no such power over the people, and that this is only a dream of the imagination.

But in England, also, as I showed you last Sunday, the sabbatarian spirit still prevails, in many quarters, and is maintained and fostered by not a few even in high places in the Church of England. That spirit has prevailed thus far to forbid all access for the poorer classes on Sundays to the National Museums and the National Gallery, though the gardens at Kew and the galleries at Hampton Court have been thrown open to the people, without any visible detriment—rather with great advantage—to the moral and social, as well as the physical, health and happiness, of the multitudes who visit them. It has prevented the Zoological Gardens being opened to the artizan, after his six days' toil; though the rich, who have all days of the week at their disposal, may enter freely on Sundays. It has silenced the music in Hyde Park; the poor may hear sweet sounds in the Church, if they can find seats, or pent-up in their crowded rooms, if there they can procure them,—but not as they walk at large, in the open air! And the last mail has brought us intelligence on this point also, namely, that the Minister of State, while stating his personal feeling that under proper regulations he should be glad to see some of these public institutions opened on Sunday, yet was obliged to declare himself incompetent to open even a portion of the British Museum, so long as Parliament refused assent to it. Yet I expressed a very strong conviction that the time is near at hand when these restrictions will be abolished,—that, as the belief in witchcraft has died out, or lingers only in dark corners of the

earth, into which light has not yet penetrated,—as other dire superstitions have departed, dead, and buried, and trodden under foot by the advancing steps of Modern Science,—so the knell has been already sounded, which announces the approaching death of the *sabbatarian* spirit within the length and breadth of the British Empire, while the true *Sunday* spirit, as I hope and believe,—the spirit of religious truth and thankfulness, of filial love, and fear, and joy,—will be only more effectually quickened and strengthened.

But this we cannot expect until the observance of the Sunday is placed on a right footing, and removed from the (supposed) Mosaic basis, on which it is even now by many believed or half-imagined to rest. It is true that quotations without number might be made from the writings of Divines, in our own Church and in other Churches, expressly protesting, and in the strongest terms, against Christians entertaining the idea that the Law of Moses was in any sense binding upon them, and notably in reference to this very Fourth Commandment. Thus Luther says:—

> *As for the Sabbath or Sunday, there is no necessity for its observance.* And, if we do so, the reason ought to be, *not because Moses commanded it,* but because Nature likewise teaches us to give ourselves, from time to time, a day's rest, in order that man and beast may recruit their strength, and that we may go and hear the Word of God preached.

And elsewhere he writes:—

> Keep the Sabbath holy for its use both to body and soul. But, if anywhere the day is made holy for the mere day's sake,—if anywhere any one sets up its observance upon a *Jewish* foundation,—then I order you to work on it, to ride on it, to dance on it, to feast on it, to do anything that shall remove this encroachment on the Christian spirit and liberty.

And so Calvin:—

> In this way we get rid of the trifling of the *false* prophets, who in later times instilled Jewish ideas into the people, alleging that nothing was abrogated but

what was *ceremonial* in the commandment, while *the moral part remains*, viz. the observance of one day in seven.

And Melancthon:—

The Scripture has abrogated the Sabbath, since it teaches that after the revelation of the Gospel all the Mosaic ceremonies may be neglected.

In our own Church, also, as is very well known, the same view has been held by very many of the greatest divines. Thus Tyndal, the first translator of the Bible into English, says:—

As for the Sabbath, we are lords over it, and may yet change it into *Monday*, or into *any other day*, as we see need, or may make every *tenth* day holy-day only, if we see cause why. Neither was there any cause to change it from the Saturday, but to put a difference between us and the Jews. Neither need we *any holy-day at all*, if the people might be taught without it.

Bishop Sanderson says that 'it ought to be taken as certain and granted among Christians'—

that no part of the Law delivered by Moses to the Jews doth bind Christians under the Gospel, as by virtue of that delivery,—no, not the Ten Commandments themselves, but least of all the Fourth, which all confess to be, at least in some part, ceremonial.

The present Dean (Alford) of Canterbury writes:—

If any one day in the week were invested with the sacred character of the Sabbath, it would have been wholly impossible for the Apostle to uphold or commend the man, who judged all days worthy of equal honour. . . . I therefore infer that sabbatical obligation to keep any day, whether seventh or first, was not recognized in apostolic times.—On Rom.xiv.5.

If the ordinance of the Sabbath had been, *in any form*, of lasting obligation on the Christian Church, it would have been quite impossible for the Apostle to have spoken thus. The fact of an obligatory rest of one day, whether the seventh or the first, would have been directly in the teeth of his assertion here. —On Col.ii.16,17.

Lastly, the Divine of the Established Church of Scotland, from whom I first quoted, has spoken thus in his recent address to the Presbytery of Glasgow:—

> I do not believe in the continued obligation of the Fourth Commandment. I have no faith in it. . . . . My belief is that the whole of the Commandment and the whole Decalogue is abrogated—that the whole thing is stamped with that which is partial and that which is to pass away. I hold that its very introduction stamps it as this—'I am the Lord thy God, that brought thee up out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. How is that applicable to me, whom God has never brought up out of the land of Egypt or out of the house of bondage?

Yet, notwithstanding all this concurrence of testimony to the fact of the entire abrogation of the Fourth Commandment for Christians, it seems to me that, so long as the Decalogue is sounded in our ears continually in the Services of the Church, without any explanation being given of its character and history, and so long as it is believed to be Mosaic and Divine, it is impossible to shake off the feeling, that we are bound in some way—very solemnly bound—to 'keep this law.' I say 'so long as it is believed to be Mosaic and *Divine*;' because you will perhaps have noticed that, in the passages just quoted, Luther speaks of '*Moses* having commanded' the observance of the Sabbath, Melancthon speaks of its being one of 'the *Mosaic* ceremonies,' Bishop Sanderson speaks of its being 'part of the Law delivered by *Moses*.' They seem to have lost sight of the fact that the Ten Commandments, according to the narrative in the Pentateuch, were uttered by Jehovah Himself in the hearing of the people, under very awful circumstances. And the very fact of the Fourth Commandment being placed upon the same line exactly as those nine others, which enjoin the most manifest religious and moral duties,—and being placed there, as is usually supposed, by direct Divine authority,—seems to invest this also with a sanction so high and holy, that it is hard to believe that it can have been altogether abrogated. It cannot but be *felt*—even if not expressly allowed in words

—to be binding still somehow upon Christians as well as Jews,—in the spirit, at all events, if not in the letter.

And this is, no doubt, the view of most of those who contend so strongly for sabbatarian observance of the Sunday in our own days, as Dr Chalmers, who says:—

> The first recommendation of the sabbath is the place which it occupies in the Decalogue. . . . We see it standing within this record, of which all the other duties are of such general and imperishable obligation. We meet with it in the centre of that hallowed ground, of which every other part is so sacred and so inviolable.

It was, perhaps, also to some extent the view of the writer of our Church Homily 'on the Place and Time of Prayer,' who says as follows:—

> Albeit this Commandment of God doth not bind Christian people *so straitly* to observe and keep the *utter* ceremonies of the Sabbath-day, as it was given to the Jews, as touching the forbearing of work and labour in time of great necessity, and as touching the precise keeping of the seventh day, after the manner of the Jews, . . . yet, notwithstanding, whatsoever is found in the Commandment *appertaining to the Law of Nature*, as a thing most godly, most just, and needful for the setting forth of God's glory, it ought to be retained and kept of all good Christian people.

But even here, it would seem, the stress is only laid on that part of the Commandment, '*appertaining to the Law of Nature*,' the rest being regarded as not having any binding effect upon Christians. Yet as one has said very forcibly (*Ed. Rev.* xcii.p.349,350):—

> Consider the *weekly recitation* of the Fourth Commandment, and the *response* to it, without one word of comment or qualification on the part of the Church, notwithstanding that nobody believes a *Jewish* sabbath to be either binding upon Christians or possible in modern life, and not the strictest Puritan of us all, not even Scotland herself, ever thinks of observing it as such. The immense variance, between the letter of this law and the most rigid practical interpretation

of it, confounds all English ideas of sabbath-keeping and sabbath-breaking, creates unnecessarily an awful *malum prohibitum*, and lays snares in the path of innumerable honest and devout men and women. If the Fourth Commandment be indeed a law of the Christians, it is too certain that all Christians deliberately break it. But, if it be a law of the Jews only, then all the scandal is chargeable upon those, who, professing to have Divine Truth in their keeping, recite this law weekly from the altar, as if it were part of the Sermon on the Mount. Such inconsistencies, to those who will reflect upon them, will appear far more important, and more fruitful of evil consequences, than most of us are aware of.

I repeat, then, so long as the Decalogue is really believed to be Mosaic and Divine, it is impossible justly to condemn the sabbatarian spirit; it seems to be perfectly natural and right. So long as these Commandments are solemnly read from the altar, as being all equally Divine commands, once uttered by Jehovah's awful voice, in the ears of Moses and all Israel, amidst thunders and lightnings, from the fiery summit of Sinai, it is vain to hope for any effectual deliverance from a slavish spirit in respect of the Sabbath-day, or for the realization of that true liberty, wherewith the Gospel of Christ has made us free, and in the enjoyment of which the Sunday will be kept by us, as it should be kept, in spirit and in truth, as a day of rest, a day of worship, a day of social rejoicing, a day which the Lord, the 'faithful Creator,' has made for the good of man. It is absolutely necessary, as it seems to me, to cut away altogether the support on which the superstitious observance of the day is based, before we can expect that some of the most earnest and devout minds among us will engage heartily in that work of reform, in respect of the opening of our public institutions on Sunday, which is so much to be desired for the physical and moral health and happiness of the whole community.

Let us look, then, a little at the true history of the composition of the Ten Commandments, as it stands now in a measure revealed to us by the results of modern critical inquiry. In the printed copy of the eighth of this present

course of Cathedral Sermons, you would find a remarkable quotation appended—too long to have been read from the pulpit—from an address delivered on Oct. 25 of last year, at the 'Annual Diocesan Conference' of the dioceses of Down and Connor and Dromore,—an address which especially deserves attention at these times, as having been composed by a layman, 'a member of our Church by deliberate conviction,'—composed for the Conference at the express request of the Bishop of those dioceses,—and delivered in his presence as chairman, before the assembled clergy and laity, without one word being uttered by the diocesan to check or correct this and many other plain outspoken statements of the truth, as it is known to those who have felt called to investigate it. From the long and very interesting extract, which I have there given from that address, I will quote now one passage, which bears directly on the subject of this day's discourse.

> Ignorance sees no difficulties; partial knowledge sees them, and recoils before them; complete knowledge sees past them, and removes them. To mention a very obvious and well-known instance,—one might read through the Books of Exodus and Deuteronomy, chapter by chapter, without perceiving that *these two Books contain different versions of the Decalogue*. But a critical study discloses this fact at once. Here is a real, though a very small, difficulty: I do not know whether any satisfactory explanation of it has been found.

I think that you will presently see that the difficulty in question is *not* a small one: and I am able also to say that a 'satisfactory explanation' of it *has* been found, though found very recently, and not probably at all of the kind which even this writer anticipated.

I say, the difficulty is *not* a small one. It is, perhaps, one of the greatest—one of the most fatal—that affects the traditionary view of the absolute infallibility of the Bible. It needs no close 'critical study' to show this. You have only to turn to your English Bibles, and the fact in question, though perhaps hitherto unobserved by you, will, as soon as your attention is directed to it, stare you at once in the face. The two accounts of the Decalogue

differ from one another in various respects,—most of them of no great consequence, and observable only by a critical student: but one variation is so great and so remarkable, that it cannot escape the notice of any thoughtful and intelligent reader. You remember, of course, the closing words of the Fourth Commandment, as they are so frequently rehearsed in your hearing from E.xx.11:—

> 'For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: *therefore* the LORD blessed the seventh day and hallowed it.'

But now listen to the closing words of the same Commandment as they are given in D.v.15:—

> 'And remember that thou wast a servant in the land of Egypt, and that the Lord thy God brought thee out thence through a mighty hand and by a stretched-out arm: *therefore* the LORD thy God commanded thee to keep the Sabbath-day.'

You see that the two reasons assigned for hallowing the sabbath are totally different. In the one case, the sabbath-rest is enjoined as a memorial of the rest of God from the work of the Creation; in the other case, it is commanded to be kept in grateful remembrance of the deliverance of Israel out of the land of Egypt: and not the least reference is made in the one instance to the reason given in the other. It may be said,—'One of the two reasons does not exclude the other; the sabbath-rest may have been instituted in commemoration of *both* events.' And this, of course, is true. But then comes the fatal point of the difficulty, that in each instance it is expressly said that *these exact words* were delivered out of the fiery mount, amidst the thunders and lightnings, by the voice of the Almighty.

Thus in E.xx.i., we read, 'God spake *all these words*, saying,' &c.; and in D.v.22 we read,—

> '*These words* the LORD spake unto all your assembly in the Mount out of the midst of the fire, of the cloud, and of the thick darkness, with a great voice, and *He added no more. And He wrote them in two tables of stone, and delivered them unto me.*'

Which words, then, did Jehovah speak?—Which did he write on the two tables of stone?—those in Exodus, or those in Deuteronomy? It is plain that this question is fatal at once to the mere traditionary notion of Scripture Infallibility, since one of these two Scripture statements must in any case be incorrect. But the difficulty is much greater oven than yet appears. For, supposing that the *first* account, that in Exodus, was really historically true,—that these Commandments were actually thus uttered, by the voice of the Most High, in the hearing of Moses and all Israel, in those Hebrew words in which they stand recorded,—and were not only uttered, but written by the Finger of God in tables of stone, which were laid up in the Ark, and so became inexpressibly sacred to Moses and all the pious among the people,—it is impossible to believe that *Moses* would have ventured, when delivering the addresses in Deuteronomy about forty years afterwards, to have modified in any the slightest respect these awfully august expressions, which Jehovah himself had uttered,—much less to have entirely changed the latter half of the Fourth Commandment. He would not have *forgotten* what must have been dear to him, and dear to all the holy men in Israel, as consecrated, household words, containing the very essence of their faith and duty; he would not have *dared to change* them. In other words, the account in Exodus is genuine, that in Deuteronomy cannot have been written by Moses at all.

And this indeed is only part of a more general conclusion, which may now be stated as one of the most certain results of Modern Criticism,—*viz.*, that, whatever may still be uncertain as to the first four Books of the Pentateuch, there is no doubt whatever, in the minds of most competent and unprejudiced scholars, that the book of Deuteronomy was certainly *not* written by Moses. It was most probably the work of some great Prophet of Judah, who lived about the time of King Josiah, fifty or sixty years before the Babylonish Captivity, and more than eight centuries after the time of the Exodus, as it is usually reckoned. In this book the Prophet, whoever he may have been, addresses to the people of his own time words suited to their actual condition, warnings and exhortations, such as their circumstances then required,

which he puts into the mouth of Moses, as the last words spoken by the great Prophet of old to the people in the wilderness. It is impossible, of course, to produce here the series of arguments, which compel the critical student of the original text to this conclusion,—though any attentive reader will be struck at once with the difference between the style of Deuteronomy and that of the rest of the Pentateuch, even as it appears in the English Version. But the fact itself is one, which rests not on conjecture and hypothesis, but upon positive evidence. It may be *contradicted,* as that of the earth's motion was, in the days of Galileo, but it cannot be *disproved.* And it will henceforth gradually take its place, like Galileo's great discovery, or Newton's principle of Gravitation, among the established facts of science, with all its fruitful consequences.

One of those consequences we see at once to be this,—that we have here an 'explanation' *to some extent* of the difference between the two versions of the Fourth Commandment, in Deuteronomy and Exodus. I say *to some extent:* for, while it is impossible to suppose, as I have said, that Moses himself, after receiving the Ten Commands in Exodus, in the manner there described,—having heard them uttered by the voice of the Eternal, and then had them for forty years in his keeping, recorded for all future ages in the tables of stone,—should have modified their language so much throughout, and especially in the case of the Fourth Commandment, when he finally charged the people with them in his last solemn address in Deuteronomy,—it *is* intelligible that a *later Prophet* may have made such changes in the language of the Decalogue, *provided that he did not himself regard it in its original form, as Mosaic and Divine, and therefore inexpressibly sacred.* If even a later Prophet had supposed that the account in E.xx. was historically true,—that the words in question were written down by Moses, having actually been uttered in his ears, and in the ears of all Israel, by the Divine Voice from the summit of Sinai,—he could not surely, any more than Moses himself, have dared to change them.

But another result of a careful examination into the actual composition of the Pentateuch has made this also plain, that the writer of Deuteronomy has written about half the

Book of Joshua, and that several passages in the first four Books are also from his hand,—among others, most probably, the *first* copy also of the Ten Commandments, in the form in which it now stands in the Book of Exodus. The proof of this is, of course, unsuitable for this place, or rather for the present occasion; though I will append a portion of it as a note to this discourse, when printed.

We have here, then, at last, a '*satisfactory* explanation' of the phenomenon to which the layman at Belfast referred. It is quite conceivable that the same great Prophet, who wrote the Book of Deuteronomy, and who appears to have made insertions here and there in the earlier Books, may at some former period of his life have introduced into the story of the Book of Exodus the first copy of the Ten Commandments, and afterwards reproduced them in the Book of Deuteronomy, making some variations in *his own* former words. It is true, the historical character of the whole narrative is destroyed for us by the discovery of this fact. But it was destroyed already, for those who have closely studied the question, by a multitude of other irresistible evidences; and you yourselves have your Bibles in your hands, and can compare for yourselves, when you reach your homes, the two different versions of the Fourth Commandment, in Ex.xx.11, and D.v.15. You will then see that the inferences, which I have drawn from this phenomenon, must necessarily follow, and cannot be evaded or ignored by us, without being false to the Truth, and to the God of Truth, whose servants and children we are.

And what then follows? It is plain that the authority usually supposed to attach to the Fourth Commandment,—and not to the Fourth only, but to all the Ten,—as having been actually enunciated by the Divine Voice, audibly, in the exact Hebrew words in which they have come down to us, either in Exodus or in Deuteronomy,—is based upon an unreal imaginary foundation. But, words like these—'Thou shalt have none other Gods but Me,—'Thou shalt do no murder,'—'Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour,'—are they less truly Divine, less truly binding on our consciences, because they have not been affirmed in this way by a miraculous attestation? If they had been so attested, would they have more Divine au-

thority than those, which flowed, without any such external evidence, from the inspired heart of the Deuteronomist—

> Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord; and thou shalt love the Lord thy God, with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, vi.4,5 ?—

words which our Lord himself pronounced to be 'the first and great commandment'; and then, adding, 'the second like unto it' out of L.xix.18, 'Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself'—he declared that in these was contained the sum and substance of the whole Law,—'on these two Commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets,' Matt.xxii.37—40.

Thus we are brought back again to the same lesson, which has been taught us by the subjects of two recent Sundays, namely, that miraculous attestation is not needed —will not be desired—by the truly devout and spiritual mind, to support and enforce Divine Eternal Truth. The Truth will attest its own presence to the conscience of man, if it be not utterly darkened and deadened, just as the Light of the Sun will make its own presence known to the bodily eye of man in its normal state. On the other hand, miracles—that is, alleged miracles—have often, as we heard on a former Sunday, deceived many, or produced an unsound, superficial belief, instead of the deep-rooted 'faith which worketh by love.' How often have the thunders and terrors of Sinai been used to enforce obedience to these Ten Commandments,—especially to the Fourth,— when a far more effective Lesson would have been taught by bringing home the conviction, that these laws have all their deep foundations laid in the very roots of our being, —that they are in themselves—not in the mere letter, but in the fulness of the spirit—enjoined by the laws of our physical, moral, and religious nature,—and that as such, from whatever source brought home to us, they have a Divine Sanction,—as such, they cannot be violated without entailing their necessary consequences.

'Think not that I am come,' said our Lord, 'to destroy the Law and the Prophets: I am not come to destroy, but

to fulfil.' He explained his meaning with reference to two of the Ten Commandments—'Thou shalt not kill'—'Thou shalt not commit adultery.' On another occasion I shall hope to show how the same words may be applied to the observance of the Sunday, but based upon a foundation more deep and more abiding than the letter of the Fourth Commandment.

*** The evidence, that the Ten Commandments, in their present form, as they stand in E.xx.1-17, are the work of the Deuteronomist, who lived eight centuries after the time of the Exodus, about the time of King Josiah, is given at full length in *App.*i. to my translation of Dr Oort's Treatise 'On the Worship of Baalim in Israel.' I here produce two points of that evidence.

(i) In E.xx.10 we find the expression 'the stranger that is within thy gates,' which occurs also in D.v.14,xiv.21, xxxi.12; compare also 'the Levite that is within thy gates,' D.xii.12,18,xiv.27,xvi.11; and note that *neither of the above formulæ occurs anywhere else in the whole Bible.*

So 'thy gates' occurs *twenty-nine* times in Deuteronomy, but *nowhere else in the Pentateuch*, and only besides *in very late passages, viz.* Ps.cxxii.2,cxlvii.13, Is.liv.12,lx.11,18, Ez. xxvi.10.

(ii) In E.xx.12 we have 'the ground (Eng.Vers. 'land') *which the Lord thy God giveth thee,*' which occurs identically in D.iv.40,v.16,xxi.1,23,xxv.15, but *nowhere else in the whole Bible;* compare also the kindred phrases, 'the land *which the Lord thy God giveth thee,*' D.iv.21,xv.4,7,xvi.20, xvii.14,xviii.9,xix.2,10,14,xxiv.4,xxv.19,xxvi.1,2,xxvii.2,3, xxviii.8,—'thy gates *which the Lord thy God giveth thee,*' D.xvi.5,18,xvii.2,—'the nations whose land *the Lord thy God giveth thee,*' D.xix.1,—'these peoples *whom the Lord thy God giveth thee,*' D.vii.16,xx.16,—with other variations, *viz.* 'the mountain of the Amorites (land, inheritance, cities,) which the Lord our (your) God (the God of your Fathers) giveth us (them),' D.i.20,25,ii.29,iii.20,iv.1,xi.17,31,xii.9, xiii.12, Jo.i.11,15,—*not one of which formulæ occurs anywhere else in the whole Bible.*

On the *traditionary* view, we should have to suppose that Moses, having made use of the above phrases, or rather having recorded them from the Divine Mouth, *once each*, in E.xx.10 and E.xx.12, in the *third month* of the Exodus, never employed one of them again in any of his writings until his last address in the *fortieth* year, and then began suddenly to use each of them freely!

XVII.

THE SABBATH.

PREACHED ON SUNDAY EVENING, FEB. 4, 1866, IN THE CATHEDRAL, MARITZBURG.

MARK II. 27.

'AND HE SAID UNTO THEM, 'THE SABBATH WAS MADE FOR MAN, AND NOT MAN FOR THE SABBATH."

THIS Morning I explained to you that it is impossible to maintain any longer the observance of the Sunday as a day of rest upon the authority of the Fourth Commandment, supposed to be infallibly Divine,—supposed, in fact, to have been actually uttered under the most tremendous sanctions, by the mouth of the Eternal Himself, from the heights of Sinai, in the ears of Moses and all Israel. I said that I could not assent to the view of many great theologians that the Law of the Fourth Commandment, though once binding upon the *Jews* by Divine authority, was abrogated altogether for *Christians*. It might be answered at once, as it has been answered by many, that, if the Mosaic Law generally was abrogated, with its cumbrous and complicated ceremonial observances, the 'yoke' of which, says St Peter, 'neither we nor our fathers were able to bear,' Acts xv.10, yet the Ten Commandments must be excepted, as moral and religious commands, which must, in the nature of the case, be of permanent, enduring interest, eternally binding on all mankind. It is true, there is felt to be a difference between the Fourth Commandment and the rest. The other nine are all perceived at once to bear directly on matters of religion and morality. To acknowledge one only Living and True God,—to worship no idol, no false representation of the Divine Being, no image made by the

hand, or set up within the heart, or framed in the mind, from the influence of educational or traditionary prejudices, in place of the Most Holy and Blessed One, as He makes known to us His own perfections,—to reverence all that comes to us, in Science as well as in Scripture, revealing the Divine Name, unfolding to us more and more of the wonders of His Majesty, Wisdom, Faithfulness, and Love, —all these are felt to be Divine Commands, eternally true, by whomsoever uttered,—and not the more so, because enforced, as is supposed, by the thunders of Sinai. Though spoken by a Prophet, a simple fellow-man, they could not have been spoken without the Spirit of God. And so, in the second Table, the duty to honour parents, to abstain from murder, adultery, theft, false-witness, coveting, are all commended by the reason of intelligent men, as answering to the demands of our moral nature, and imperatively required for the maintenance of the best interests of society. But the observance of the Sabbath seems to be of a more *outward* character, and not directly corresponding to the moral nature of man. As Richard Baxter says, it is a duty, 'but of positive institution, and not naturally known to man, as other duties are.'

Still, as the Fourth Commandment is put in the same rank exactly with the rest, it has seemed to very many excellent persons—and I think very justly—that, if the other nine really had the express sanction of that awful Divine manifestation, of which we read in the Book of Exodus, this Fourth Command must be invested with the like authority; it must have been meant for perpetual observation in all future ages; it cannot have been abrogated, any more than the rest. Thus Hooker says that the 'laws and ordinances positive of the Mosaic Law,' are 'plainly distinguished from the laws of the two Tables which were *moral*,' which last, he says, III.ii.1, were—

> uttered by the voice of God Himself in the hearing of six hundred thousand men,—written with the finger of God,—termed by the name of a Covenant,—given to be kept without either mention of time how long or of place where.

It is true, again, that such reasoning is met with the fact that our Lord and his apostles seem to have treated

somewhat lightly the question of sabbath-observance. In the text our Lord says, 'The sabbath was made for man, not man for the sabbath'; and he adds, 'For the Son of Man is Lord of the sabbath-day.' And he carried out this assertion in act, not only by doing works of charity and mercy himself on the sabbath-day, but by reproving the Pharisees, when they censured his disciples for an act of unnecessary labour, and by ordering a man to 'take up his bed, and walk,' on the sabbath-day. He sat down also on the sabbath-day at a *feast*, 'in the house of one of the chief Pharisees,' Luke xiv.1,7,12, where there must have been certainly much unnecessary labour, in preparing the banquet and waiting upon the guests. St Paul also says distinctly:—

> 'Let no man judge you in meat or in drink, or in respect of an holy-day, or of a new moon, or of sabbath-days, which are a shadow of things to come; but the body is of Christ.'—Col.ii.16,17.
>
> 'One man esteemeth one day above another; another esteemeth every day. Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind. He that regardeth the day, regardeth it unto the Lord; and he that regardeth not the day, to the Lord he doth not regard it.'—Rom.xiv.5,6.

And it is very noticeable that, throughout the New Testament, there is not a single instance of any stress whatever being laid on the strict observance of the sabbath-day. Our Lord himself and the Apostles, of course, observed it, as did the Jews of that time; but they never, in any act or word recorded in the Gospel or Epistles, inculcate, either by example or by precept, a sabbatarian spirit. Rather, as we have seen, so far as their words and acts imply anything in this respect, they tend to discourage and discountenance such a spirit. And expressly, in the famous decision of the Church at Jerusalem, which was forwarded to the believing Gentiles at Antioch, by the hands of Paul and Barnabas, Judas and Silas, they laid no 'burden' on them of sabbatical observance: they wrote only—

> 'It seemed good to the Holy Ghost, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary

things,—that ye abstain from meats offered to idols, and from blood, and from things strangled, and from fornication,—from which if ye keep yourselves, ye shall do well. Fare ye well.'—Acts xv.28,29.

Yet still it is said,—and said very justly,—there stands the Fourth Command among the rest,—all believed to be Divine utterances, and the other nine assuredly, having the sanction of the witness for God's Truth in our hearts and consciences, as essentially and eternally true. If this be so, there must be a deep meaning, an eternal necessity, embodied in the Fourth Command as well as the rest. We may not indeed be bound any longer by the mere letter of these words. As in the Fifth Commandment, the promise, 'that thy days may be long in the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee,' was meant expressly for the Jews to whom the words were first uttered, and must be explained for us, in a figurative sense, as implying the abundance of blessings that shall attend a dutiful and loving childhood—blessings which may not be always 'temporal,' but 'spiritual,' in that good 'land,' beyond the river, which God shall 'give us' in the eternal world, —so too the *seventh* day of the week may have been enjoined upon the Jews, while the *first* day may be binding upon us, the change having been made, no doubt, by apostolical authority. In short, the essence of the command may be fulfilled in this, that we 'keep holy' one day in seven, 'calling' the first day of the week instead of the seventh 'a delight, the holy of the Lord, and honourable,'—'not doing our own ways, nor finding our own pleasure, nor speaking our own words,' on the Lord's Day, the Sunday,—on which the Creation of the World began, —on which Christ rose from the dead,—on which God rested from the work of the New Creation, when He poured out His Spirit on the Church on the day of Pentecost.

Such is, no doubt, the reasoning of many excellent persons at the present day. I need hardly say, however, that there is no ground whatever for supposing that the adoption of the Christian Sunday, in place of the Jewish Sabbath, rests upon apostolical authority. On the contrary, the apostles themselves, as we see by many instances in

the Acts, kept with their countrymen the ordinary Jewish Sabbath, Acts xiii.42,44, xvi.13, xvii.2, xviii.4. And, as you heard last Sunday, for a long time in the ancient Church, the Jewish Sabbath was observed by many, as well as the Christian Sunday, which certainly would not have been the case, if any distinct rule had been laid down by the Apostles on the subject, substituting by express authority the first day of the week to be kept holy instead of the seventh. That the *first* day of the week, 'the day of the Sun,' *was* observed from very early times among Christians, as a day on which they specially assembled for religious purposes, we know from undoubted authority. But no writer of the first three centuries has attributed the origin of Sunday observance to any apostolic authority. In the first century—

> Barnabas (or whoever else wrote the epistle ascribed to him), Justin Martyr, A.D. 147, Dionysius Bishop of Corinth, A.D. 170, Tertullian, A.D. 192, Clement of Alexandria, A.D. 192, Origen, A.D. 230, Cyprian, Bishop of Carthage, A.D. 250, all mention or allude to the religious observance of the Sunday; but not one of them even hints that it originated in any precept of Christ, or in any recommendation of the Apostles, either by precept or example. Yet, had any such precept been given, or example set, it is incredible that it should not have been known in the times of the writers above-named, and hardly to be believed that, if known, it would not have been mentioned by them or by some of them.—Sir William Domville, Bart., *The Sabbath*, p.303.

I may quote the words of Justin Martyr:—

> We all of us assemble together on the day of the Sun, because it is the first day in which God changed darkness and matter, and made the world. On the same day also Jesus Christ our Saviour rose from the dead. For he was crucified the day before Saturn's (day); and on the day after Saturn's (day), which is the day of the Sun, he appeared to his apostles and disciples, and taught them what we now submit to your consideration.

But now, with respect even to the Jewish Sabbath it is

very noticeable that, except in the Pentateuch itself, where the laws are laid down with the greatest solemnity for its observance, as an express Divine Institution, there are no signs of its having been kept with any remarkable strictness, or of any attempt having been made, by the most pious kings or prophets, to enforce the keeping of it, *before* the time of King Josiah, that is, shortly before the Babylonish Captivity. On the contrary, in the few passages in which the sabbath is mentioned at all, it is put upon the same level as the day of the 'new moon.' Like *that*, it is spoken of as a day of religious solemnity, but not at all as being specially distinguished with its own peculiar honour, —as having been enjoined by express Divine authority, amidst the terrors of Sinai. Thus, in the story of Elisha, the Shunammite mother, whose child was dead, determines to 'run to the man of God, and come again.' Upon which her husband says, 'Wherefore wilt thou go to him to-day? It is neither *new moon* nor *sabbath*.' 2K.iv.23. So Isaiah says, i.13,15 :—

> 'Bring no more vain oblations! Incense is an abomination unto me; your *new moons* and *sabbaths*, the calling of assemblies, I cannot away with; it is iniquity, even the solemn meeting. Your *new moons* and your appointed feasts my soul hateth; they are a trouble unto me; I am weary to bear them. And, when ye spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you; yea, when ye make many prayers I will not hear; your hands are full of blood.'

And Amos, viii.4,5 :—

> Hear this, O ye that swallow up the needy, even to make the poor of the land to fail, saying, When will the *new moon* be gone, that we may sell corn? and the *sabbath*, that we may set forth wheat, making the ephah small and the shekel great, and falsifying the balances by deceit?

And Hosea, ii.11 :—

> I will also cause all her mirth to cease, her feast days, her *new moons*, and her *sabbaths*, and all her solemn feasts.

In another passage we read of soldiers on guard, 'enter-

ing in' to the temple, and 'going out,' 'on the *sabbath*,' 2K.xi.5,7,9, and of a brazen 'covert' or portico, which had been made in the temple 'for the *sabbath*.' There is one psalm, the 92nd, whose title is 'a psalm or song for the sabbath-day.' But the age of this psalm is unknown, and the titles of all the psalms are very doubtful, and in the context of the psalm itself there is no reference whatever to the sabbath-day. And these are the only places in the Bible, before the time of Jeremiah,—that is, before the reign of King Josiah,—in which the sabbath is mentioned at all, except in the Pentateuch,—it being borne in mind that the latter part of the Book of Isaiah was, as I have more than once mentioned, written during or after the Captivity.

We have here, then, indications that the sabbath was observed with some particular religious ceremony. But we have nothing to imply that it was recognized as enjoined upon the people under the most tremendous Divine sanctions,—no psalms to show that to the true and faithful it was 'a delight,' regarded with special affection as 'the holy of the Lord and honourable,'—no prophecies recalling the people to a sense of their duty with respect to it, as 'a sign between Jehovah and the children of Israel for ever,' 'to be observed throughout their generations for a perpetual covenant,' or to warn them of the terrible consequences of neglecting the Divine Command, as declared in the Book of Exodus :—

> 'Ye shall keep the sabbath therefore; for it is holy unto you; every one that defileth it *shall surely be put to death*; for whosoever doeth any work therein, that soul *shall be cut off from among his people*.' xxxi.14.
> 'These are the words which the Lord hath commanded that ye should do them. Six days shall work be done; but on the seventh day there shall be to you an holyday, a sabbath of rest unto the Lord; whosoever doeth work therein *shall be put to death*. *Ye shall kindle no fire* throughout your habitations on the sabbath day.' E.xxxv.2,3;

and these enforced by the dreadful story in N.xv.32-36 :—

> 'And, while the children of Israel were in the wilderness, they found a man that gathered sticks upon the

sabbath-day. And they that found him gathering sticks brought him unto Moses and Aaron, and unto all the congregation. And they put him in ward, because it was not declared what should be done to him. And the Lord said unto Moses, 'The man shall surely be put to death: all the congregation shall stone him with stones without the camp.' And all the congregation brought him without the camp, and stoned him with stones, and he died, as the Lord commanded Moses.'

Who can believe that such a command as this ever really proceeded from the mouth of the Ever-Blessed God?—a command, too, which would appear to have been powerless to prevent the evil, which it proposed to cure,—which did not hinder the people at large from defiling the sabbath with pollutions infinitely worse than that of gathering a few sticks for a fire,—'your new moons and sabbaths I cannot away with: *your hands are full of blood.*' And what a noble work is that of Modern Criticism, which enables us to regard the Bible with true reverence, as containing the words of a Divine Revelation, without therefore maintaining that it has been supernaturally protected from all the defects and faults of human productions,—which relieves the character of God our Heavenly Father —of Him who is both 'Light' and 'Love'—from the dark stains, the odious imputations, which such narratives as these must, in any reflecting mind attach to it, if believed to be divinely-guaranteed statements of infallible truth! For see how in a moment the finger of Criticism points to the proof, lying plain before our eyes, that this story is an insertion of a later day than that of Moses, and most probably was not even a part of the original narrative of the Exodus. '*While the children of Israel were in the wilderness*'—how could these words have been written by *Moses*, who *never came out of the wilderness*, who delivered his last address, as we read in D.i.1, 'on the other side Jordan *in the wilderness*,' and who 'died there in the land of Moab,' D.xxxiv.5? Or how could they even have been written by one, who, as there is reason to believe, in a far later day than that of the Exodus, composed the main portions of the Pentateuchal story, but composed them as

if written by the hand of a contemporary and eye-witness, if not by the hand of Moses himself?

Here, in short, we have another instance of those numerous insertions, which have been made in the original narrative of the Pentateuch by writers of a later age. Of these, as you heard this morning, the most important is the Book of Deuteronomy, almost the whole of which is shown by convincing evidence to have been written either, as some think, *shortly before*, or, as I see reason to believe, *during* the reign of King Josiah, about fifty years before the Captivity of Judah. In this Book, in an address put into the mouth of Moses, as the last words spoken by the great Lawgiver to his people, we have a record of the Ten Commandments; and I drew your attention this morning to the remarkable fact, that this second record differs materially from that in E.xx, more especially in respect of the Fourth Commandment,—a totally different reason being given in Deuteronomy for hallowing the Sabbath, from that which is given in the Book of Exodus. I showed what important consequences followed from this fact,—how fatal it was at once to the notion of the absolute Infallibility of Scripture, since each record professes to give the exact words that were uttered by the Divine Voice amidst the thunders of Sinai, and were afterwards engraved on tables of stone. And I then went on to say that this first version of the Ten Commandments in the Book of Exodus, *at least in its present form*, is also most probably the work of the Deuteronomist,—an insertion made by him in the older document, which he appears to have revised, and enlarged with various additions of his own, before composing the Book of Deuteronomy. I say, *at least in its present form*, because there are some, who, aware of these serious difficulties which escape the notice of so many readers, and not willing to abandon entirely the notion of the Mosaic origin of the Decalogue, think that the record, as it now stands, may be based upon some very ancient tradition, handed down orally or in writing, of ten *very short* commands, as originally given by Moses, to which additions have been made in a later age.* I do

* Thus the Rev. E. H. Plumptre, Professor of Divinity in King's College, London, and Examining Chaplain to the Bishop of Gloucester and Bristol, in

not myself concur in this view, for various reasons which this is not the place for explaining. But this difference of opinion does not at all affect the 'great main point,' viz., that the Ten Commandments in their present form, even as they stand in Exodus, were no part of the original narrative, but are a later insertion, most probably, as I have said, by the hand of the Deuteronomist.

We can now understand the fact, that no particular stress seems to have been laid upon the keeping of the sabbath-day in Israel before the age of King Josiah,—that is, before the age of the Deuteronomist.

Let us next observe that in E.xx.11 the observance of the sabbath is based upon the fact of God's resting after the Creation:—

> 'For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the Lord blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it.'

Here there is plain reference to the story of the Creation, as told in the first chapter of Genesis, and the first three verses of the second,—that story which was brought before us in the Lessons of the Church last Sunday, as that of the Fall has been this morning, and that of the Deluge this evening. I need hardly say that, with our present knowledge, it is no longer possible to regard these narratives as statements of matter-of-fact, historical, occurrences,—that no doubt now remains in the mind of any intelligent, well-educated person, that not even the world in which we live—much less, the mighty Universe, of which it forms such an insignificant part—was made in six days, as the Bible statements, honestly interpreted, most certainly imply. On the fourth day, we are told,—

> 'God made the two great lights,—the greater light

his article on the 'Ten Commandments,' in the Biblical Dictionary, iii.1464, admits the 'possibility' of this conjecture being true. He writes:—

'Ewald is disposed to think that even in the form, in which we have the Commandments, there are some additions made at a later period, and that the second and fourth Commandments were originally as briefly imperative as the sixth or seventh. The difference between the reason given in E.xx.11 for the fourth Commandment and that stated to have been given in D.v.15 *makes, perhaps, such a conjecture possible.* . . . Obviously, *both* forms could not have appeared written on the two Tables of Stone. Yet D.v.15,22, not only states a different reason, but affirms that 'all these words' were thus written.'

to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night, —and the stars.'

Our English Version has it, '*he made* the stars also;' but the words *he made* are printed in italics, to show that there is no corresponding word in the original Hebrew. This has probably misled many to suppose that the writer is merely referring, by a sort of parenthesis, to the creation of the stars at some former period, perhaps long before the creation of the earth,—that he is merely recording here the fact of their creation by the same Almighty Hand, which made the 'two great lights,'—not the fact of their creation *at the same time* as they. But this is not the meaning of the Hebrew writer: he simply describes, as the work of the fourth day, 'God made the two great lights, the Sun and Moon, and the innumerable lesser lights, the stars.' He thought of the Earth as the centre of the whole Universe; he thought of the Sun, as merely the servant, as it were, of the Earth, created to give it light, to rule the day and divide the year, and that the stars were bright specks in the firmament of heaven, created for what purpose he could scarcely conceive. He knew nothing of the glory and order of the Solar System, —of the grandeur of its King, around which our little Earth, with its troop of fellow-planets, is continually revolving,—of its enormous bulk so vast, that if its centre were placed at the centre of the Earth, its huge spherical body would reach out on every side half as far again as the Moon,—in the centre of which our little earth would be as a pea in the centre of a four-foot globe, with the moon like a pin's head circling around it, one-third of the way from the surface to the centre. He knew nothing of the stupendous wonders of the starry heavens,—of their vast distances from our sun and from each other, in regions utterly beyond our ken,—of their glorious splendour, of which the mere sparkle only reaches mortal sight, —of their prodigious multitudes, of which the numbers seen by our unassisted eyes give only a faint conception. He thought, no doubt, of the Sun and Moon as nearly equal in size, and as placed at nearly equal distances from the earth. He did not know that one travelling night and day at railway-speed, 100 miles in three hours, might reach the Moon in 300 *days*, but would only reach the Sun

in 330 *years*, and that, if he could reach the Sun in one single day, it would take 550 *years* of *such* travelling to reach the nearest Fixed Star,—that between our Sun with his little troop of planets, and the nearest star on every side, there is an awful vacancy,—void silent space, in which to all appearance there exists no organic life whatever,—only the vibrations of light are propagated through it, and God reigns alone in His Glory. He knew not that not only do we—our little Solar System—stand thus apart from each of the starry host in awful solitude, but each Star also is a Sun, and each Sun is doubtless separated from the nearest Sun by the same vast vacant interval, overwhelming all thought,—and the 'Milky Way'—that system of countless suns to which our Sun belongs—is but one out of a multitude of others, which we see dimly shining, like faint nebulous spots, in various parts of the sky. No! the Hebrew writer possessed nothing of all this knowledge, which God has granted to us in the present day, through the gifts which He has bestowed on some of our fellow-men, and the blessing He has poured upon their labours. And we must receive, devoutly and thankfully, the results of their discoveries, however disturbing they may be to our former notions, if we would not break the *First* of the Ten Commandments, and have another God than Him, who, by these declarations of Science, reveals Himself to our minds, as He does by His Spirit to our spiritual natures,—if we would not break also the *Second* Commandment, and insist on worshipping that false representation, that image, of God, which we have made for ourselves, under the influence of false traditionary teachings.

We know, of course, that attempts have been made to force the plain statements of the Hebrew writer—statements grand in their august simplicity—into agreement with the facts of Science. He places, for instance, the creation of the *light* on the *first* day, and of the *Sun*, the source of light, on the *fourth* day. But an eminent Divine (Dr Pusey) said, in the late Norwich Congress—

> In the case of Moses' statement, that light existed before the Sun, the physicists have had to own that Moses was right, and they in their objection wrong.

I know not to what the speaker referred, unless it be to the fact that light is not now supposed, as it was by Sir Isaac Newton, to emanate from the Sun, but is believed to be caused by vibrations propagated by the Sun's action, through an elastic fluid, called ether, supposed to exist throughout the vast intervals of starry space as well as in all transparent bodies, and consequently this ether must have existed before the Sun could have acted on it. But *ether* itself is not *light*; the vibrations, which cause light, are produced by the Sun; and the fact, that mention is made of the 'morning and evening' of the first, second, and third days, shows plainly that the writer contemplated that interchange of day and night, which we now know to be caused by the Earth's rotation on its axis, presenting its different parts successively to the Sun's rays.

Again, the same speaker said:—

> Some thought that God did not create any of the stellar system till some 6,000 or 9,000 years ago. Geology, however, occasioned us to observe what we had no reason to dwell upon,—the chasm between the verse, 'In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth,' and 'the earth was waste and desolate.' For, before, we adored God's wisdom in creation, and we had no occasion to think of a gap which we had no data to fill up. Now, however, that our attention has been called to it, the fact is just as much a fact of language, as other facts are facts of geology. Negatively, this is absolutely certain, that the Bible does not say the earth was created at any definite past time, and that between *its original creation*, mentioned in *v.*1., *and man's creation*, there is room, if need be, for time countless by man.

But you see that, in the course of these remarks, the speaker has shifted altogether the ground of the objection as first stated. Admitting for a moment that, between the Creation of the Heaven and the Earth in the first verse of Genesis, and the catastrophe by which the Earth was made waste and desolate in the second verse, and so became ready to be re-formed again, there is room for a 'chasm,' for 'time countless by man,' yet the 'stars' are said to

have been made—not in the middle of this 'chasm,' but —on the *fourth* day of the new state of things, that is, about 6,000 years ago. Besides which, in the Fourth Commandment we find it stated distinctly that 'in six days God made'—not merely the light, the firmament, the dry land and sea, the vegetable and animal world, and, last of all, man, but 'in six days God made—*the Heaven and the Earth*, the sea, and all that in them is.'

Then others say that the creative days may mean *long intervals* of time,—forgetting that, after the creation of the Sun on the fourth day, the 'days' surely meant then only ordinary days of twenty-four hours, and that the whole meaning of the Fourth Commandment is evacuated, if the 'day' on which God is there said to have rested, in remembrance of which the seventh day was to be sanctified, was not a day of the same kind exactly as the 'six days' on which He is said to have worked.

Instead of these futile attempts to force these Scriptural statements into agreement with scientific facts,—attempts most injurious to our sense of truth, most destructive of all true reverence for the Bible, and for the Word of God which speaks to us through its pages,—let us admit that we have no warrant for expecting that God will reveal to us supernaturally those facts of Science, which He means in His own good time to reveal to laborious searching inquiry. It was well said at the Belfast Diocesan Conference, in the presence of the Bishop and Clergy, by the layman from whom I have already quoted:

> All these attempts have failed, and I trust we have seen the last of them. But, were any of them to succeed, while it solved one difficulty, it would raise an infinitely greater one; for it would be one of the greatest conceivable difficulties, if it were proved that the Holy Spirit commenced the work of revelation by revealing truths of mere physical Science.

And the same admission, in fact, though it denies the literal historical truth of this portion of the Pentateuch, is made in a volume of 'Replies to Essays and Reviews,' published under the express sanction of the Bishop (Wilberforce) of Oxford:—

> Some school-books still teach the ignorant that the earth is 6,000 years old, and that all things were created in six days. No well-educated person of the present day shares in the delusion. . . . . Whatever be the meaning of the six days, ending with the seventh day's mystical and symbolical rest, *indisputably we cannot accept them in their literal meaning.* They serve, apparently, as the divisions of the record of Creation, lest the mind may be too much burdened and perplexed by all these wonderful acts; but *they as plainly do not denote the order of succession of all the individual creations.*

Such is the statement made, under the authority of the Bishop of Oxford. And thus we can now no longer receive this account in Genesis as a record of historical or scientific fact. We see that it is only the attempt of a devout philosophic mind of those ancient times, to express in words the ideas, which either had arisen in his own mind, or which perhaps he had derived from others, as to the creation of the Universe.

But what follows from this? Do we at all the less believe that God *is* the Creator of the Universe,—that man is made in the image of his Maker,—that all things which God has made are very good? Doubtless, the writer of this Scripture narrative was taught from above—he was 'inspired'—to discern these grand eternal truths. But are they only true because he has stated them? Does our faith in them at all depend on their being found in the Book of Genesis?—much less on their being found in an *infallible* Book? Or is it at all affected by our finding that they are mixed up with incorrect and unscientific statements about the manner, order, age, of the Creation,—that the writer was not 'inspired' to discern scientific truth?

But, with the historical truth of the account of the Creation, is abandoned also the very basis, upon which the observance of the Fourth Commandment is based in the Book of Exodus. If it can no longer be believed that 'in six days' God made the Universe, and rested on the seventh, then the whole basis of the traditionary reason for sabbatarian observance falls at once to the ground. And yet I believe, as I said last Sunday, that there is a very true and living sense, in which it may be said that God has given us

a law on this point, as well as on the other points with which the Decalogue is concerned. We no longer suppose that these other laws were actually uttered with a Divine voice from the heights of Sinai: and we shall do wrong if we leave our congregations in doubt about this matter,—if we do not tell them plainly that, in reading these Commandments, beginning with the statement, 'God spake these words and said,' we are merely reading, in obedience to the directions of our Church, a passage from the Bible, as we read by the same authority the Psalms or the Athanasian Creed, without committing ourselves individually to the Psalmist's imprecations on his enemies, or to the damnatory sentences of the unknown writer of the latter document. Still we feel, as I have said, that there is a Divine Sanction for nine out of the ten commandments,—though not an outward sanction, of lightnings and thunderings, and the sound of a trumpet and the voice of words, when—

> 'Mount Sinai was altogether on a smoke, because the Lord descended upon it in fire; and the smoke thereof ascended as the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mount quaked greatly; and when the voice of the trumpet sounded long, and waxed louder and louder, Moses spake, and God answered him by a voice.'

Not for this reason do we reverence these commands, but because they find an answering voice within us, because our hearts and consciences—our moral and religious nature—testify that on these points 'the law is holy, and the commandment holy, just, and good.'

But so, too, as Richard Baxter says—

> It is of the Law of Nature (that is, known by natural light, without other revelation) (i) that God should be worshipped, (ii) that societies should assemble to do it together, (iii) that some set time should be separated statedly for that use, (iv) that it should be done with the whole heart, without worldly diversions or distractions.

And in point of fact, all civilised and many even of barbarous nations, by the light of nature, *have* been led to set apart such special times for the worship of Almighty God. But Baxter adds—

> I know nothing in nature alone from whence a man can prove either (i) that it must be just one day in seven, or (ii) just what day of the seven it must be, or (iii) just what degree of rest is necessary: though reason may discern that one day in seven is a very convenient proportion.

But, perhaps, reason may discern something more than this,—may see that the setting apart of *one day in seven* for rest and refreshment, as well as for common worship, does rest upon a deeper foundation than mere 'convenience,'—upon what may be called a command of nature, and therefore may be regarded as having a Divine authority,—a point which, if it please God, we will consider together next Sunday evening.

XVIII.

THE SABBATH.

PREACHED ON SUNDAY EVENING, FEB. 11, 1866, IN THE CATHEDRAL, MARITZBURG.

MARK II. 27.

'AND HE SAID UNTO THEM, 'THE SABBATH WAS MADE FOR MAN, AND NOT MAN FOR THE SABBATH.''

IN my former sermons on this subject I have shown that there is no indication in the Bible of any attempt having been made to enforce a strict observance of the sabbath among the Jews before the time of King Josiah. I have mentioned that in that age the Book of Deuteronomy was written, which contains one record of the Ten Commandments; and I have shown, in the note appended to my printed sermon, that the other copy of them, which we find in the Book of Exodus, must certainly—at least in its present form—have been composed by the very same hand, *viz.*, that of the prophetic writer of Deuteronomy. Although the *sabbath* appears to have been kept, as well as the *new moon*, in all ages, yet it is only in and after this age that we find the later prophets—Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and the later Isaiah,—laying great stress upon the observance of the sabbath, as the sign of Jehovah's covenant with Israel; and so, too, in the Book of Nehemiah, written after the return from the Captivity, we find mention made of Jehovah having 'made known unto them His holy sabbath,' ix.14, and of strenuous efforts being made to prevent the desecration of the sabbath, by labour and traffic.

'In those days saw I in Judah some treading wine-

presses on the sabbath, and bringing in sheaves, and lading asses; as also wine, grapes, and figs, and all manner of burdens, which they brought into Jerusalem on the sabbath-day: and I testified against them in the day wherein they sold victuals. There dwelt men of Tyre also therein, which brought fish and all manner of ware, and sold on the sabbath unto the children of Judah and in Jerusalem. Then I contended with the nobles of Judah and said unto them, What evil thing is this that ye do, and profane the sabbath-day? Did not your fathers thus, and did not our God bring this evil upon us, and upon this city? Yet ye bring more wrath upon Israel by profaning the sabbath. And it came to pass that when the gates of Jerusalem began to be dark before the sabbath [that is, on what we should call Friday *evening*, when the Jewish sabbath began], I commanded that the gates should be shut, and charged that they should not be opened till after the sabbath [that is, they were shut from Friday evening till Saturday evening; whereas, you may remember, the sabbatarian law in Edinburgh closed them yet more strictly, from Saturday evening till Monday morning]; and some of my servants set I at the gates, that there should no burden be brought in on the sabbath-day. So the merchants and sellers of all kind of ware lodged without Jerusalem once or twice. Then I testified against them, and said unto them, 'Why lodge ye about the wall? If ye do so again, I will lay hands upon you.' From that time forth came they no more on the sabbath. And I commanded the Levites that they should cleanse themselves, and that they should come and keep the gates, to sanctify the sabbath-day.'—Neh.xiii.15-22.

In these later times, then, of the history of Israel, as in the still later days of our Lord, the sabbath was kept—with great strictness, by some devout men, as Nehemiah, and by others who, like the Pharisees, made a great profession of religion, but substituted too often outward observances like this for the inward service of the heart which God delights in. But in earlier

days we find no trace of this spirit,—no sign that the sabbath was put on a higher level than the new moon. And this fact is accounted for, when we find that the first copy of the Decalogue, as well as the second, dates from a late age in the history of Judah,—that it was never really binding on the Jews, as the traditionary view supposes, as having been uttered by the Divine Voice, under a tremendous sanction, from the top of Sinai,—that, instead of being binding on the Jews, at least formerly, but abrogated for Christians, the whole Decalogue is binding upon Jews and Christians alike,—the Fourth Commandment as well as the rest,—*so far, and so far only*, as (to use the words of our Church Homily already quoted) anything is found in them '*appertaining to the Law of Nature*,' grounded in the necessities of our physical, social, moral, and religious being, and therefore 'a thing most godly, most just, and needful for the setting forth of God's glory,' that 'ought to be retained and kept of all good Christian people.' As to the other nine Commandments, we have no doubt that Nature teaches us abundantly our duty with regard to them. Let us now consider what Nature also teaches us as to the duty or the wisdom of setting apart one day in seven.

And here I will first quote the words of an eminent Jewish scholar upon this point (Dr Kalisch in his Commentary on Genesis) :—

> The simple and obvious explanation of the holiness of the number seven is, that the Ancient Israelites, as most of the Eastern nations, counted originally their months after the course of the Moon, which renews itself in four quarters of seven days each, and after this time assumes a new phase. These periodical and extraordinary changes of the Moon produced a powerful impression upon the susceptible minds of the ancient nations: they excited them to reflections on this wonderful phenomenon, and everything connected with it assumed in their eyes a peculiar significance. Hence the day of the *New Moon* was generally celebrated with some distinguishing solemnity, which, like all festivals, is regulated and fixed in the Mosaic Law; and the New Moon is in the Old Testa-

> ment frequently mentioned with the sabbath. . . . . But the division of the week into seven days was known and adopted by the most different nations, as the Assyrians, Arabs, Indians, Peruvians (but not the Persians), and many African and American tribes, which never came into intercourse with the Israelites, and later by the Greeks and Romans, who followed the Egyptians. We must therefore recognize therein, not an exclusively theocratical, but a general astronomical arrangement, which offered itself to the simplest planetary observation of every people.

In this way, then, the seven days' week appears to have originated, among so many different nations in all parts of the earth, by their common observation of the time, which it takes for the moon to pass from one of her chief phases to another, which interval is to all appearance seven days, though in reality a fraction more. In this way originating, the seven-days' week may justly be said to be an institution of the Law of Nature, and therefore one of Divine appointment. We no longer suppose that the Creation of the world took place in six days, with successive outward Divine utterances, as described in the first Chapter of Genesis. Yet for all this, and notwithstanding that the Hebrew writer may have held mistaken notions about the time, manner, order, of the creation,—about the nature, magnitudes, and distances of the Sun, Moon, and Stars,—he discerned the eternal under-lying truth when he wrote, 'And God said'—'said,' not with outward audible utterance, on the fourth day of the Creation, but said in the depth of the Divine Mind, conceived in eternity as a Divine Idea, and expressed in time by that Divine Word, 'by which all things were made,'—

> 'Let there be lights in the firmament of the heaven, to divide the day from the night, and let them be for signs and for seasons and for days and for years; and let them be for lights in the firmament of the heaven to give light upon the earth: and it was so.'

The day, then, is given to us by Nature, and therefore by Nature's God, for labour, and the night for rest. As the Psalmist has written, civ.19-23 :—

He appointed the Moon for seasons :
The Sun knoweth his going down.
Thou makest darkness, and it is night,
Wherein all the beasts of the forest do move.
The young lions, roaring after their prey,
Do seek their meat from God.
The sun ariseth, they gather themselves together,
And lay them down in their dens.
Man goeth forth unto his work,
And to his labour until the evening.'

As a rule, then, there is a law laid upon us by the ordering of our Creator, that we should wake and work by day, and rest and sleep by night. It is a law not meant to be enforced with strict severity, as if we might never work by night or sleep by day: it is a law made known by a wise Father to intelligent children,—by the Divine Reason to His reasonable creatures. The law of the interchange of day and night was 'made for man,'—not man for the law. Yes! the same Divine Wisdom, which ages and ages ago, before man was brought into being, ordered beforehand that gigantic growth of trees and grasses and vegetable matter, which, deposited through millions of years in those primeval swamps, have now formed the coal-beds for the use of man,—the same gracious Being, who ages beforehand has provided the stores of lime, and slate, and building-stone, with the mineral wealth that lies deep buried in the bowels of the earth, with an express view to the wants and needs of just such a creature as man,—has ordered also the grateful interchange of light and darkness, of day and night,—I say not for man alone,—but expressly for the benefit of man among the rest. The law of daily toil and nightly rest is to be our *rule*, our general guide,—though we are left at full liberty, of our own free will, when we see occasion for it, to depart from it. We know that, if we do depart from it constantly, without something to compensate the breach of Nature's law, we shall suffer the consequences. We know that, if children or young persons generally, were habitually suffered to prolong the day into the night,—were allowed to sleep day after day, while the sun by its health-giving influences is diffusing light and life all around, to exchange these for artificial light and unnatural excitement, breathing continually the unwholesome exhal-

ations of the night hours,—they would soon be seen to fade away and fail. There are those of maturer age, whose duties or necessities call them to make more or less habitually the night their working-time, or even to work in mines under-ground, or to toil on painfully in other situations, deprived to a great extent of the light and life of day. But these are unnatural and unwholesome occupations, and, as we know, if long persisted in, are generally sure to shorten considerably the span of human life. It is God's Law that the daytime shall be the time of labour for the *individual*, as well as the time for social *common* work, for the setting forward of those labours which concern the welfare of the whole community. In a very deep and living sense, then, it is true that—

> 'God said, Let there be lights in the firmament of the heaven to divide the day from the night: and God set them in the firmament of the heaven, to give light upon the earth, and to rule over the day and over the night, and to divide the light from the darkness: and God saw that it was good.'

And so is it with regard to the week and the weekly rest. We know by experience that men cannot go on for ever, day after day, wearied and worn by toil and the cares of business, or the labours of public life,—that they need intervals of rest, by means of which the body may be refreshed and invigorated, and the mind recover its elasticity, and both may be ready to spring on cheerfully again to the work suspended. Nature points out to us certain annual seasons of more extended holiday, as at Mid-Winter, in the Spring, and after Harvest. And we find, in fact, that among almost all nations—even the most barbarous—some such seasons are observed, as times of very general relaxation of all anxious thought, as seasons of social meeting and enjoyment. The very Zulus have their festivals at the beginning of our Southern Spring and at the end of our Autumn, corresponding to the 'feast of firstfruits' and the 'feast of ingathering' of the ancient Hebrews, E.xxiii.16.

The times of *these* festivals are marked out for us by the *Sun*. But, besides these greater annual holidays, we need

also—at all events, in civilized communities, where there is such continual tension of the brain, and draining of the nervous energy—the recurrence of days of rest at shorter intervals,—rest, not to be enforced upon us, from the necessity of a positive law, but rest commended to us by the wise provisions of our gracious Creator, and approved by universal experience to be a source of infinite blessing, —the right of the poor man as well as the rich,—as needful, in fact, for the wants of our physical, social, moral, and religious nature, as the rest by night after the toil of the day. 'God has spoken this word to us,' not from the burning summit of Sinai, but in His Fatherly Wisdom and Goodness, by the mere fact of ordering the changes of the Moon for us, and fixing her distance from the Earth, with reference to the Earth's mass, just exactly as He has fixed it, so that she completes her changes once a month. I do not say that this is *the* reason—the only reason—why the great Creator has ordered these things thus. But I do say that we may thankfully believe that He has ordered them thus for this reason among others, just as he has instituted the interchanges of day and night for *this* reason, doubtless, among a multitude of others, that man may go forth unto his labour until the evening, and then may lie down to rest. The 'greater light' has been made to 'rule the day,' and 'the lesser light to rule the night.' But the whole disk of the Sun is daily visible in the heavens: whereas the Moon at the end of seven days shows only one half of her disk, in seven days more the whole of it, in seven days more the other half, and in seven days more is lost to sight altogether. It is true the lunar month, in which the Moon thus goes through her different phases, consists really of $29\frac{1}{2}$ days, so that from one chief phase to another would be a fraction more than seven days. Still with rude nations this difference would not be noticed. And, that the seven days' week really originated among so many different nations in all parts of the earth from watching the phases of the Moon, is indicated by the fact that the Peruvians not only divide the lunar month into halves and quarters by the Moon's phases, but they have also a period of *nine* days, the approximate *third* part of a lunation, thus showing the common origin of both; and so the Romans had their *ninth* day of the month, which was a holiday even for

slaves, and the Greek lunar month, consisting alternately of 29 and 30 days, was divided into sets of *ten* days.*

Let me now quote in support of this view a passage from the Bampton Lectures delivered before the University of Oxford in the year 1860. The writer (Dr Hessey) says :—

> To what, it may be asked, is the division of time [by weeks of seven days] to be traced? I answer, without hesitation, to man's observation of those 'lights in the firmament of heaven,' which God placed there to 'divide the day from the night,' and of which He said further, 'Let them be for signs, and for seasons, and for days and years.' It required no special revelation to direct men to these, as convenient indicators of time. The course of the Moon, and especially the appearance of the New Moon, would suggest a division, roughly stated, of [months of] twenty-eight days. This, perhaps, would be the first and most prevalent division. It certainly was all but a universal one; for it is found even where *weeks* were unknown, and where they are still unknown,—among the aborigines of the New World. The full Moon would supply the fortnight; and the half of it, each way, as men grew more and more exact, would supply an approach to a perfect septenary division of time. . . . . Our purpose is merely to show that a septenary division of time might have suggested itself to man's reason, acting upon the luminaries, which we find God's Providence intended for his guidance in such matters, without any special revelation, much less any hint of the sabbath being necessarily implied in the existence of such a division.—See Hessey's *Bampton Lectures*, p.139,142,415, quoted in Cox's *Lit. of the Sabbath Question*, i.p.288.

Another able writer observes on this point, *Edinburgh Review*, cxiv.p.545-8, see Cox, i.p.290 :—

> The phases of the Moon supply a familiar mark of time to the simplest and rudest nations,—the phenomena of the new and full Moon, especially, being such that men cannot fail to notice and employ them

* Prof. Baden Powell, *Christianity without Judaism*, pp.90-92.

as the natural rule of their calendar. And, if a two-fold division of the month is thus a matter of necessity to an ordinary observation, a fourfold division also is at least inevitably suggested by the Moon's intermediate phases. In either case, of course, an approximate adjustment only is possible; and, while under the former system *thirty* days would be chosen [as nearly equal to the true lunar period, 29½ days], under the latter system cycles of *twenty-eight*, of *fourteen*, and of *seven* days, would be taken perforce, as the nearest symmetrical approximation to the same period and its four subdivisions,—an arrangement, which, however faulty in scientific accuracy, is found nevertheless to fall in sufficiently, after short intervals of recurrence, with the natural phenomena which suggested it, and to supply a convenient measure of coincidence with the solar cycle also. Thus we have the week of seven days . . . . . It is almost impossible, then, to avoid the conclusion to which we are pointing, when once we have discarded (as the majority of thoughtful men have now consented to discard) the notion of an actual six-days' period of creation. So long as that notion was maintained indeed, and was considered as a necessary part of religious belief, we could respect and even sympathise with the fixed determination to see nothing in the facts we have referred to beyond a singular coincidence. But now that we perceive ourselves both permitted and compelled to regard the seven Mosaic days as a figure of speech, an accommodation to some previously existing mode of thought, we are prepared to listen in a totally different attitude of mind to what reason and history have to say.

We conclude, then, with all reasonable confidence, that one day out of seven has been graciously indicated by the Creator as a day of rest for labouring and weary men,—that, although the Hebrew philosopher in Genesis had no real historical basis for inserting in his cosmogony a sacred reason for the custom, which he found already existing among his people, and the observance of which he desired to enforce among them, yet there was a deeply-

grounded substantial truth in his assertion, 'God blessed the sabbath day and sanctified it.'

Let us consider, in conclusion, in what sense, with reference to what wants of his nature—as our Lord has said in the words of the text—'the sabbath was made for man.'

(i) It is good, first, for his *physical* nature, that his nerves may be relaxed, the pressure taken off his brain, the sweat of toil wiped off his brow. We all feel that, while regular and constant employment is upon the whole the best condition for the health and vigour of all the faculties, it may be too constant—too wearying and exhausting—for body or mind. This becomes most evident, when a break intervenes, and *after the holiday* the tasks of daily life are renewed with a fresh spring of energy. This is felt most strongly indeed at the time of youth, when labours for the most part are carried on by compulsion, whether of parents or teachers, or of masters and employers. But it is not confined to youth alone: and, whether the muscles or the mind are at their full stretch, we know that they are more fit for use after rest, or after such a change of action as amounts to rest. For *inaction* is not by any means always the rest of waking human creatures, and to the young it is often irksome in the extreme, and physically, as well as morally, injurious. Hence it is that to them the *Holy Day* is too often the very opposite of a *Holiday*, and the notion of Heaven, as an eternal sabbath, most distasteful and disheartening; while the righteous rebellion of all their faculties against the sabbatarian restraints imposed upon them,—which is merely the voice of that very nature, which God has given them,—has been too often most ignorantly and cruelly interpreted into a sinful aversion of the mind from God and his Laws—I need not say, with what serious consequences, in too many cases, to the whole future life of the child. I believe that to this cause—perhaps, as much as to any other—may be traced the fact, that so many children of pious, but unwise, parents grow up ungodly and profane. Their whole notions of religion have been distorted from the first; their nature has been thwarted, their ideas of right and wrong confounded, their spiritual growth dwarfed and stunted; till at length all their views about religion have become embittered, gloomy,

and morose; they hate the very thought of it, and turn with distaste from all mention of that 'other God,' whom they have been taught to worship, instead of the One only Living and True God.

I say, then, for our physical nature we all need, as a rule, the rest of Sunday; but that rest should consist of *refreshment* of body and mind, as well as of mere relief from the six-days' toil. That refreshment will be found differently under different circumstances: and let no man judge his brother in the matter; to his own Master each must stand or fall. What is wanted in this respect, instead of mere dull inaction, is such pleasant exercise of mind or body, as shall best relieve the burdened system, and leave it best fitted for the other uses, for which the Sunday rest is needed.

(ii) For our *moral* nature requires it no less than our physical. It is good that the course of this world's business should be checked for a while, and brought to a standstill regularly from time to time,—not merely at the great annual festivals, but at these frequent shorter intervals. It is good that men should be able—at all events, for one day in seven—to shake off their chains, and realise that they are not bound as slaves for ever to cash-books and ledgers, to buying and selling, to the labours of the office, the workshop, and the study,—that they have a right, the very humblest and poorest among them, to go forth on this day in the dignity of Nature's freedmen, cleansed from the dust and stains of the weekly labour, released from its necessary, but often sordid, drudgery, clothed in their best, and lightened, as much as may be, of the burdens and cares of life, to enjoy the sunlight and the breeze, the sight of the broad earth, the sea, and the sky, to walk among the fields and flowers, the corn-lands and pastures, and hear the song of birds, the ripple of the stream, or, it may be, the mighty sound of ocean's murmurings,—and to say, with a childlike reverence and confidence, 'It is our Father's Hand which made them all.'

(iii) For, thirdly, our *religious* nature needs the day of rest,—that we may have time to turn our thoughts within, and see how we are ripening for Heaven,—see how we are making ready for the great account, and growing in the tempers of the children of God,—that we may specially

commune, each with his own soul, and with the Great Creator, may seek His Face, may study His Word and His works, may 'acquaint ourselves with God, and be at peace.' The true child of God will, indeed, have such communion with his Heavenly Father each day of his life. But, on other days, the cares and duties of the world intervene; they must more or less distract his thoughts, and engage his time, and they must be allowed to do so; for they are part of that six days' work, which God gives them to do, as He gives them also the day of rest. But as George Herbert says very beautifully:—

> The Sundays of man's life,
> Thredded together on time's string,
> Make bracelets to adorn the wife
> Of the Eternal Glorious King.
> On Sundays Heaven's gate stands ope;
> Blessings are plentiful and rife,
> More plentiful than hope.
>
> Thou art a day of mirth:
> And, where the week-days trail on ground,
> Thy flight is higher, as thy birth:
> O let me take thee at the bound,
> Leaping with thee from seven to seven.
> Till that we both, being tossed from earth,
> Fly hand in hand to heaven!

(iv) Lastly, our *social* nature needs above all the Sunday, and for this end, we may believe, it is specially indicated. The Sun and Moon are set in the heavens to be for 'signs' and for 'seasons,' not to single individuals, but to *all*,—to all together, and alike to all. How greatly are the joys of the Sunday-walk, of the Sunday-recreation, of the Sunday-holiday, intensified, by sharing them with others, with the members of our family, it may be, reunited from time to time, or with friends and neighbours, breathing with us the fresh air, and freedom, the enlivening delights, of the day of rest! What support it also gives to the moral sense of man's higher nature and destiny, of his dignity above the brutes that perish, when by common consent the business of daily life is broken off, that all may meet together on that day at least, cleared from the week's defiling dust, not as masters and servants, as lords and labourers, but as fellow-men, upon the common ground of their

humanity! And may meet together in the House of Him, who is the Father of all! For this—Common Worship—is the highest and noblest of all the occupations of Sunday. It is true, men may worship God in the closet at home, or as they walk abroad, in the depths of the wood, by the babbling stream, by the margin of the sea, or on the mountain-side. But in religion, as well as in other matters, it is not good for man to be alone—it is not meant that he should be so. And the presence of many worshippers, joining together in common prayer and praise to the great Father of all,—feeding together on the same living bread,—drinking together freely from the same wine and milk, 'without money and without price,'—bringing together their burdens of sorrow or of sin, their cares and troubles, or, it may be, their songs of deliverance, their tribute of thanksgiving, to the Adorable Source of all Light, and Life, and Blessing,—this union of many hearts tends to strengthen and deepen the religious feeling of all; it helps us to realise more fully the fact that our spiritual being is a glorious reality, that communion is possible—is actually taking place—between the Father of spirits and His children upon earth, that we are members together of one great Family, one Church of the Living God.

I say, then, brethren, it may be hoped that the Legislature will soon clear away the hindrances, which prevent so many of our poorer brethren from enjoying to the full the Sunday rest, as He, who framed their Being, has meant them to enjoy it,—so many, who debarred from access, during at least some part of the Sunday, to purer sources of delight in Gardens and Museums, where the wonders of nature and the beauties of art are stored, are driven to seek other pleasures, of a gross and sensual kind, more destructive to body and soul than continued labour, —are driven by sheer vacuity of mind, having no power, even if they would, to devote the whole day to religious thought and worship, being utterly incapable of such prolonged mental exertion, having the Sunday on their hands, and not knowing what to do with it.

We may believe also that not only will the Legislature make this improvement of the present system, but many throughout the length and breadth of England will help to carry out the same principle in their own immediate neigh-

bourhoods—will throw open on Sundays, as some now do, their parks for the refreshment of the people, enjoying their enjoyment, and counting themselves in this respect, as well as in others, to be but 'stewards' for their brethren 'of the manifold gifts of God.'

But still the glory of the Sunday is Common Worship. And, whatever may be done, publicly or privately, to enlarge and to elevate the enjoyments of the working-classes on the Sunday, God forbid that it should not be done with a due regard to the Worship of Almighty God, which especially irradiates and dignifies the day, and casts a bright ray over all the week besides. Let us then—

> 'consider one another, to provoke unto love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is.'

For what is to be desired is, not that the Sunday should be secularized, but that the true Sunday spirit, the spirit of Christian Trust and Hope, and Joy, the spirit of child-like love and child-like confidence, the spirit of devout delight in the Word and in the Works of our adorable Creator, and the spirit of brotherly love to one another, shall so penetrate our whole being, with the help afforded by the Sunday rest, that the secular six days' work may be ennobled, purified, and sanctified.

XIX.

PREPARATION FOR THE LORD'S TABLE.

PREACHED ON SUNDAY MORNING, FEB. 11, 1866, IN THE CATHEDRAL, MARITZBURG.

MARK I. 14, 15.

'NOW AFTER THAT JOHN WAS PUT INTO PRISON, JESUS CAME INTO GALILEE, PREACHING THE GOSPEL OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD, AND SAYING, 'THE TIME IS FULFILLED, AND THE KINGDOM OF GOD IS AT HAND: REPENT YE, AND BELIEVE THE GOSPEL.''

THE catechism of our Church furnishes us with a full exposition of the meaning of these words, first, in connexion with the subject of Baptism, but more especially with reference to the act of Holy Communion, to which you are this day invited. That Communion, in fact, is, in its inner meaning, a lively emblem of the Kingdom of Heaven, viz. peace on earth, peace and love, between God and Man, between man and man. This is the heavenly Feast at which you are summoned this day to sit down,—where you are called to partake of that spiritual bread and wine, which are freely given to those who hunger and thirst, 'without money and without price.' That spiritual food is the glad tidings of our Lord's Divine Doctrine. This is that 'flesh' and 'blood' of Christ, that life-giving Word, which it is our privilege to eat and drink at the Holy Table,—

to be hungered after for life's sake, to be devoured by hearing, ruminated upon by the understanding, digested by faith;

While specially we 'show forth the death' of our Lord, making mention of the body that was broken, and the blood that was shed, when he laid down his life as a wit-

ness for the love of God to Man,—doing this 'in remembrance' of that Good Shepherd, who, having loved the sheep, loved them even to the end, and was faithful unto death, even the death of the cross.

In what spirit, then, should we come to this heavenly Feast? The catechism tells us partly, when it asks, 'What is required of persons to be baptized?' and answers,—

> Repentance, whereby they forsake sin, and Faith, whereby they steadfastly believe the promises of God made to them in that Sacrament.

Repentance and *Faith*—these are the two things required for Holy Baptism: '*Repent* and *believe the Gospel.*'

But the catechism replies more fully on this point, in the answer given to the question which it puts with reference to the Holy Communion—'What is required of them who come to the Lord's Supper?'—where it is replied:—

> To examine themselves whether they repent them truly of their former sins, steadfastly purposing to lead a new life,—[there again is *Repentance,*]—whether they have a lively faith in God's mercy through Christ, with a thankful remembrance of his death,—[there is *Faith,*]—and whether they be in charity with all men.

Thus there is something added now to Repentance and Faith: these are the requisites for being first admitted into the Kingdom of God. But, being admitted, a growth in Christian Grace is required of us, in proportion to the blessings which God has vouchsafed to us,—'of them that have received the more, shall the more be required.' We must see that we have grown, as the days have passed over us, and we are drawing daily nearer to the great account, in that spirit of charity, of which the Apostle has spoken so earnestly and solemnly in the passage read for the epistle of this morning,—as being the only true sign of a Christian, of a child of God, of one ripening for heaven,—without which all spiritual powers,—the gift of tongues, of prophecy, of knowledge, of strong faith, of abounding liberality, of burning zeal,—are as nothing, and the possessor of them, though an Apostle himself, but 'as sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal.'

Let us now direct our attention more closely to these three points. At other times we may be occupied—and shall be rightly occupied—in considering those questions in theology, which are the subjects of such deeply interesting discussions in the age in which we live. We should not be true men, if we did not sympathise with those who are engaged in these discussions, on one side or the other, —if we did not wish to take our part in them, as God shall give us power and opportunity to do so. We should not be true Christians, if we did not believe that we must 'buy the Truth' at any cost,—that the Truth alone can 'make us free,'—that only by the Truth can we 'be sanctified,' and come to the clearer knowledge of God, whom to know is 'Life Eternal.' We cannot be true children of God, true sons and daughters of the Lord Almighty, unless we cling with our whole heart and soul to the conviction, that God, our God and Father, is present with us now, as surely as He was present with our brethren in the days of old,—that He is revealing Himself now, in all the discoveries of Science, as certainly as He has revealed Himself in the Scriptures,—that God's Eternal Truth cannot suffer or be imperilled by any errors or 'heresies' of mortal men,—but that God's Will is that we follow after the Truth, whithersoever it leads us,—that He calls us especially in this our day to do so, fearing no evil, for He Himself is with us, and nothing shall harm us, if we are 'followers of that which is good.'

In this spirit, on other occasions, we may pursue together these inquiries,—drinking, I trust, as we go from the brook of the water of life by the wayside. But this morning let us prepare, as many as are thus minded, for coming to the Holy Table, in the spirit described in the text and in the catechism,—the spirit of repentance, of faith, and of charity.

(i) Jesus said, 'Repent ye': 'it is required of those who come to the Lord's Supper,—

> to examine themselves whether they repent them truly of their former sins, steadfastly purposing to lead a new life.'

What a blessed thing it is for us to know that the Gospel message takes us just as we are, sinful, sin-defiled, sin-

burdened creatures, and conscious, each of us, of our defilement,—that it speaks the first word of hope to us, 'Repent!' The voice is not, 'Come ye that are pure, and without any stain! Come ye that have struggled and striven to the death with sin, and overcome it!' but 'Come ye that are sick, and know your need of healing medicine,—ye that feel sore, and wounded, and bruised, and long for the balsam of God's Word, the refreshing cordials of His Grace,—ye that have sins to confess and mourn,—come ye, and repent, and resolve in God's strength to lead a new life.'

There may be those here present, whose consciences accuse them of grievous sins against their sense of right and wrong, against the laws of their own moral nature, which have eaten into the very core of their spiritual life, and which, unrepented of and unforsaken, will surely weigh them down to the grave, and beyond it, with the bitter inevitable consequences of indulged evil-doing. Once more the call of mercy—of tender pity and compassion—is sounded for such as these among the rest,—'Repent and believe the Gospel!'—believe that, as a father cares for his wayward child, and is ready to receive him, when he comes back sorrowful and ashamed to his long-forsaken home, is ready to fall upon his neck with tears and kisses, so He, that teaches that father to love, watches tenderly for you, waits and longs for your return, will run to meet you with His helping hand, when He sees you yet afar off, will give you again a lot among His children, though you feel yourselves unworthy to enjoy it. You shall eat once again at His board of the bread of life; you shall know again that peace, 'which passes all understanding,' and to which your heart has long been a stranger, in the sense of His Forgiveness, in the assurance of His Love; and, though He may see it good to chasten and correct you, you shall even kiss the rod with tears of thankfulness.

But the sins of most here present will be those which men are prone to commit amidst the common temptations of life,—by breaches of the law of love and righteousness, of truth and purity,—by faults of temper, by acts of greed and covetousness, or, it may be, of actual dishonesty,—by the very common sins of evil-speaking, lying, and slandering,—or (what is just as common) by the unrestrained in-

dulgence of those appetites with which our nature is endued by the Creator, and which were meant to be ruled by our reasoning powers, for God's glory and our own true welfare and happiness. Here, too, the word is 'Repent, and believe the Gospel!'—believe that you are called to be the children of God, the sons and daughters of the Lord Almighty, and sell not your royal birthright for a mess of pottage.

To 'repent, and steadfastly purpose to lead a new life,' is a very different thing from renouncing the claims of business, and the duties and pleasures of society, or the joys of family life, and fancying that, to please God, we must 'go out from the world,'—must cease to be men and women, and aim at something which may be called angelic, but which has no connexion with our proper humanity, and exists, in fact, only in the imaginations of men. From such an ascetic notion, indeed, the present age may be supposed to have emancipated itself, though it once prevailed greatly, and still to some extent lingers among us, if indeed it is not even at the present time increasing. The evil thence arising is that, while men still continue to hold theoretically what in practice they ignore, namely, the inherent impurity of the natural desires,—that the body and its appetites are in themselves unholy,—that fasting and vigil are in themselves acts of piety,—that the single life is more holy than the married,—that beauty in nature or in art is one of those 'pomps and vanities,' which our Christian profession bids us renounce,—that, as a poet of the last age said—

> Some flowers of Eden we still inherit,
> But the trail of the Serpent is over them all,—

while men allow these things as truths, yet do not, cannot, act upon them, but shape their own lives and conduct, though without confessing it, on a scheme more natural and healthy,—while, I say, there is this discord between their creed and their conduct, it cannot but be that real faith in the Unseen must suffer, that conscience must be deadened. If one course of life is allowed by us in theory to be the best, while another is followed in obedience to the necessities of life or to natural instinct, we are untrue to ourselves, and such untruth cannot but have its evil consequences on our spiritual being.

We must assert, then, that, what is natural and human, being in accordance with the will of our Creator, must for that very reason be good in its own proper place and measure,—that we *must* have intercourse with one another, must eat and drink, and buy and sell, and marry and be given in marriage, and are not at liberty to withdraw ourselves from the 'world' in which God has placed us, that we may act our part in it with manliness, vigour, and prudence, with integrity, forbearance, patience, and brotherly-kindness,—that health and cleanliness are the only holiness that can be predicated of the body, not the absence of all bodily desires and appetites. But, while asserting this resolutely, we must all be painfully sensible that our Father's good gifts have too often been abused by us; and things good in themselves may be productive of the greatest evil, when taken from their place in the Divine Order.

'Not slothful in business, serving the Lord,' is the Apostle's word to a Christian: and again—

> 'Let not sin reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof. Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin; but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God.

To forsake all evil habits, by which we have disfigured our past life, or abused our members as servants of sin and death,—that is repentance. To resolve henceforth to use our life and all its powers as instruments of righteousness, according to the will of Him who gave them,—that is the new life which is required of us, if we come to the Lord's Supper. The monk of former days, in his filthy cell, with his frame emaciated by disease, with his senses blunted by neglect, so that all the beauty and glory of God's universe was wasted on him, and seemed to be the work of a devil, is a painful object. We are in very little danger in these days of following his example. But the same mistaken notion, which led him to choose solitude and bodily neglect and privation as the way to heaven,—the notion that he must escape from the creature in order to find the Creator,—the notion that 'the earth is the Devil's and the

fulness thereof,' and not the Lord's,—the same notion, I say, though in a different form, leads others to worship the creature instead of the Creator. Discerning the order and beauty of the Universe, and unable to harmonize it with those views of the Deity in which they have been trained, they abandon all hope of reconciling them, declare that there is no God, and sink down into a blank materialism.

But we have not so learned Christ, or our relationship to God as brethren of Christ, as creatures of His Hand, and children of His Love. We know that all things in nature, as God has made and ordered them, are very good: we know that *we* are made to 'glorify God with our *body* and with our *spirit*, which are God's.' We are here on earth, as in the workshop of the Great Artificer, who desires our perfection, desires to fashion us for Himself. We are in His workshop, yet not as mere clay in the hands of the potter, seeing that the *discipline* of our wills is what He intends, and not their *annihilation*. He would not have us choose the better part, because there is a Mighty Being, who commands that we should do so. He would have us love Goodness, choose what is right and best for its own sake, love God Himself, because He is Good, not because He can destroy us if we do not love Him.

Yet, alas! how often have we chosen the evil, and sought the gratification of our own lower nature, when it could only be had by disregarding our duty to ourselves or to others, and therefore by sinning against God and His Goodness! Can we recall the sad, sorrowful, past, and make it as though it had not been? Never! We can never do this. But we may enter again into communion with God and Goodness by 'repenting,'—by repenting 'truly,'—not in a mere form of words, but with a respectful, a remorseful, heart, as those who know that they have very deeply grieved a Father, a Friend.

Let us, then, '*examine ourselves* whether we repent us truly of our former sins.' To this end self-examination is good and wholesome,—not a morbid system of self-inspection, a weighing of motives and measuring of feelings,—but a careful consideration of how far especially we have been *habitually* departing from our own standard of right, our own sense of what it becomes us, as men and Christians, to do and to be. It need not be said that

repentance terminating in words alone, or even in feelings of sorrow for the past, is a mere deception practised upon our better selves, a mere mockery of God; and, the oftener such unreal acts of penitence are repeated, without any corresponding change in the life, the less likely it is that any reformation will ever take place. We may pray, in fact, too often. Although we ought to 'pray without ceasing,' that is, live in the spirit of prayer and dependence, we may easily occupy ourselves too much with penitential services, and dwell too much in mere outward forms of self-examination.

And, in dependence on God's ever-present help, let us 'steadfastly purpose to lead a new life,'—new, not merely in respect of the abandonment of any former sins, or any sinful habits we may have contracted, but new also as a *spiritual* life, welling up from the depths of our own being, fed daily by communications from the Divine Source. Good habits are indeed invaluable: they are 'smooth paths for our feet,' which daily practice, constant striving to do well, of itself prepares for us. But besides these we need from day to day an increase of new life, an inward impulse, an upward striving of the soul, which communion with God, the vision of Divine Truth, and the devout contemplation of it, alone can give.

> 'They that wait upon the Lord, shall renew their strength; they shall mount with wings as eagles: they shall run and not be weary: they shall walk, and not faint.'

(ii) 'Jesus said, Repent, and *believe the Gospel:*'—'it is required of those who come to the Lord's Supper—

> to examine themselves whether they have a lively faith in God's Mercies through Christ, with a thankful remembrance of his death.'

Do we believe, then, in God's Mercies revealed to us through Jesus Christ, who has brought a forgiving Father near to us? The forgiveness of sins, the restoration of the penitent to communion with his God, the Fatherly Love and Mercy of God, was the very key-note of our Lord's Divine teaching. Ah! how fearfully did the Church contrive, during 'the first thousand years of her history,' —ay, during the first five hundred,—to blot out that cen-

tral truth from her system, interposing a mortal priesthood between the conscience and its God! And how gloriously has the Truth, through the Goodness of God, in answer to the crying needs of His children, burst forth again and again from the clouds of ignorance, charged with sacerdotal thunders and lightnings, the very smoke of the pit! —as in the days of Luther, to whose awakened—nay, inspired—conscience the words, 'I believe in the Forgiveness of Sins,' came like a new revelation.

Do we believe, then, in the Mercies of God, declared to us and ministered in the life and death of Jesus our Lord? Do we believe that in him—in his hatred of sin—in his grief for the sinner—in his pity for the weak, the fallen, and outcast—in his love for the faithful and true of heart, —the Living Word was talking of the Father, and showing to us His Blessed Character? And have we a 'thankful remembrance of his death,'—that he sealed in that hour the labours of his life,—that he failed not, he fainted not, the dear Son of God and Son of Man, until the work was finished, which his Father gave him to do, leaving us a bright example, that we should follow his steps? Do we thank God in our hearts that we fear not now to die, since that loving and holy one has died at God's command, has breathed forth that gentle prayer, to be laid to heart by all mankind, 'Father, into Thy hands I commend my spirit?' And do we bear in mind that he,—who by his pure life and patient death, his constant mind of love, displayed to the end in that other intercession, which he made upon the cross with dying lips for his murderers, 'Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do,' offered that one offering which alone is acceptable to Infinite Love, the offering of a holy will consummated in act,—has taught us also each in our measure to do the same, has given us a call, has given us strength and encouragement to do so, —to 'fill up,' as St Paul says, 'that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ,'—to offer up to our Heavenly Father that living sacrifice of faith, and love, and obedience, from all humanity, redeemed from death by the indwelling of the Living Word, inspired and quickened with the spirit of Christ, with which the Father will be 'well-pleased,' which will be 'holy, acceptable in His sight, our reasonable service'?

Those, indeed, who think lightly of their own moral delinquencies, are not likely to have a lively sense of 'God's Mercies through Christ'; as he himself said, 'They that be whole need not a physician.' But a mere fear of *punishment*, of the painful consequences of sin, will not produce that sensitive conscience, which is the great instrument of moral and spiritual reformation. The contemplation of God's Goodness alone can do this,—the sense of the infinite unspeakable loveliness of the Divine Character, which makes the soul long to approach him, and produces also sorrow and self-abhorrence at the thought of having offended, refused obedience, departed from the Living God. 'Now mine eye seeth thee; wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes.'

It may seem, perhaps, to some a matter of course, an obvious thing, that God should forgive the penitent,—that the Lord of all should '*bear no malice*,' as it has been said, against a poor child of the dust for anything he has done. But let all the religions of the world bear witness to the difficulty, which the guilty conscience has everywhere felt, of escaping from the fear of Divine Vengeance, not as the mere natural and necessary consequence of the sin, but as a special expression of the wrath, the aversion, of the Supreme Ruler against the sinner. What hetacombs have bled, and not of brutes alone, but of human victims! What toil and what torture has the sinner borne, in hope of reconciling an offended Deity! What a Divine oracle was that, then, which spoke from the lips of Jesus, when he taught his disciples to pray, saying,—

> 'Our Father which art in Heaven! Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us.'

and added the assurance,—

> 'For, if ye forgive men their trespasses, even so shall your Father in heaven forgive you your trespasses.'

or when he said,—

> 'Verily, I say unto you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth'!

How comforting it is to know that the most sinful child of man, if only he set his face to return to his Father, will be accepted of Him, may claim his son-ship in the great Family of God! Nay, conscious as we each must be of

our own shortcomings, how comforting it is to feel that we are looked upon as one great Family,—that not each in our solitary selves are we beheld by God, but as one body with Christ, 'heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ,' every member of which is inspired by that Living Word, who is the Light and Life of men!

(iii) But, lastly, it is required of those, who come to the Lord's Supper, to 'examine themselves whether they be in charity with all men.'

This is pre-eminently the Feast of Love, an expression of our fellowship with one another, as followers of Christ, as children of God. It is true, this very Eucharist has been made a terrible weapon in the hands of theological partisans in all ages, for breaking Christian fellowship, for rending the Family of God asunder. That Feast, which should have been the brightest light upon our path, as the sign of our love to one another and of God's Love to us all, has been made to cast the darkest shadow. At this moment, as we know, the three great bodies of European Christians, the Greek Church, the Roman Church, and the English Church, have no communion with each other. And in England itself there are large Christian societies, which do not communicate with one another. While here also, as we know, in South Africa, the threat of excommunication has been launched against any, who shall not have been guilty of immorality of life, or have even avowed great differences in religious opinions, but shall simply have taken a different view as to their duty under certain circumstances.

But let us, my brethren, not so 'learn Christ.' Let us welcome to our fellowship all who love him,—all who love God and who love man,—whatever their shades of opinion may be. If the laws of our Church do not yet allow free access to the Table of the Lord, for all such as these, if they will,—for all who are 'pure in heart,' 'meek,' 'merciful,' 'peacemakers,' 'hungering and thirsting after righteousness,'—for all whom Christ himself pronounced to be 'blessed,'—let us confess this to be a blot in our system, a stain upon our feasts of charity; and let us do our best, as time and opportunity shall serve, to help towards a better state of things than this—one more in accordance with the will of our Lord. But let us each,

individually, seek to be 'in charity with all,'—above all, with such as these, whom God our Father assuredly holds in His Embrace, whatever our earthly differences of creed may be.

I need not say that, to those who are leading a mere selfish life, or indulging in malignant feelings towards others, the Supper of the Lord is the most empty of all ceremonies—a profanation of holy things. But let our sense of our own demerits—of our need of forgiveness—if we 'repent us truly for our former sins' — help to subdue in us all feelings of irritation against our offending brother, all hatred or contempt of those, who perhaps may bear ill-will to us. Let our desire and determination to 'lead a new life,' the life of true Christians, help us to rise above those lower feelings, that 'bitter envying and strife,' which abounds in the world, which is of the earth, 'earthly, sensual, and devilish,' which misbecomes the children of God. Let the sense of God's Fatherly Love, of His 'Mercies through Christ,' overflow our whole being with kindness, tender pity, and compassion for all, and help us to forgive as we have been forgiven. Let the 'thankful remembrance' of his death, who suffered on the cross, still yearning after those who knew not what they did, when they rejected, scoffed, reviled, and crucified him, bring down our high thoughts, humble our pride, and help us to obey his word—

> 'I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you,—that ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven.'

Let us seek to grow in that spirit of charity,—in love to God, in love to our fellow-men as children of God, which is a better test of our being true Christians, a better sign of our meetness to partake of this heavenly Feast, than any mere orthodoxy of creed can be. If we must needs differ, let us differ as Christian men should do, with respect for each other's conscientious convictions, not 'biting and devouring one another, that we be not consumed one of another.' If we must express our differences, let us labour to do so, with firmness, and yet with

forbearance,—'speaking the Truth in Love,'—not heaping upon those from whom we differ hard names, however mistaken we may deem them. In one word, let us bear in mind what we have heard to-day:—

> 'Charity never faileth: but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away. And now abideth Faith, Hope, and Charity, these three: and the greatest of these is Charity.'

XX.

THE TEMPTATION IN THE WILDERNESS.

PREACHED ON SUNDAY MORNING, FEBRUARY 18, 1866, IN THE CATHEDRAL, MARITZBURG.

MATT. IV. 1.

'THEN WAS JESUS LED UP OF THE SPIRIT INTO THE WILDERNESS, TO BE TEMPTED OF THE DEVIL.'

I SUPPOSE that there are few passages of Scripture, which have more staggered the faith of intelligent Christians, thoughtfully considering what they read, and endeavouring to realise to themselves the scenes described in the sacred story, than this account of the Temptation of our Lord, which our Church sets before us in the Gospel for this day, the first Sunday in Lent. In former days when the four Gospels were believed to have been composed by the Apostles or apostolic men, whose names they bear, and it was laid down, as being absolutely necessary to salvation, to believe the literal historical truth of this and every other narrative recorded in them, the hearing or reading of this strange account must often have perplexed and troubled the pious mind, when not trained in the habit of receiving implicitly, with unquestioning faith, or rather credulity, the assertions of dogmatic theologians. In the first place, an attentive study of the three accounts of the Temptation, as given by the first three Evangelists, will easily detect many minor variations or discrepancies in them. Thus, for instance, in Matthew it is implied that the 'tempting' by the devil began to take place at the end of the forty days, whereas in Mark and Luke it is spoken of as lasting during the whole forty days; and

nothing is said in Mark about the three special acts, which in Luke are represented as the closing and crowning acts of the Temptation, and in Matthew as the whole of it. Again, in Mark, nothing is said about our Lord's miraculous 'fasting,' while Matthew and Luke are silent about his being with the 'wild beasts,' which Mark mentions. Further, in Mark we read that during the whole forty days he was 'tempted of Satan,' was 'with the wild beasts,' and 'the *angels ministered to him*'—ministered apparently to his necessities, and supplied him with food, (since Mark does not speak of his fasting); whereas in Matthew 'the angels came and ministered to him' only at the end of the Temptation. Again, in Luke the *order* of the three temptations is different from what it is in Matthew; and the words ascribed to our Lord Himself, and especially those ascribed to the Tempter, differ from one another in the two accounts. Thus in Matthew we read,—

> 'All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me;'—

whereas in Luke the Tempter's words are amplified,—

> 'All this power will I give thee, and the glory of them; for that is delivered unto me, and to whomsoever I will I give it. If thou therefore wilt worship me, all shall be thine.'

For those, who abandon altogether the traditionary notion of the absolute infallible accuracy of every part of Scripture, and who cling merely to its general historical truthfulness, admitting therefore the possibility of the existence in the historical parts of the Bible of such ordinary discrepancies and variations, as would be certain to occur, more or less, in any genuine book of veracious history,—more especially in *three* versions of the same transaction, written by different authors,—for those, I say, who do not maintain the extravagant dogma, that the Holy Spirit has protected the Bible from all error of every kind, so that every line and letter of the Sacred Volume must be infallibly true,—there might be no insuperable difficulty in explaining such differences as I have noticed, without damage to the general truth of the whole. I need not say, however, that they *are* fatal—the last-mentioned,

especially, in which the words both of Jesus and the Tempter are quoted differently by the two Evangelists—to the notion of strict literal accuracy. So, too, it might be possible to account in some plausible manner for the entire silence of St John—or the writer of the fourth Gospel, whoever he may have been—about any such 'Temptation' at all.

But the substance of the narrative contains far more serious difficulties for the thoughtful mind—as, for instance, the statement that the Evil Spirit appeared in a visible form,—that he spoke thrice with Jesus, in some common language, we may suppose the Syriac, then used by the Jews of Palestine,—that he quoted the Bible familiarly in the same tongue, and was silenced by quotations from it,—that he carried the person of our Lord through the air to the pinnacle of the temple,—nay, that he bore him—

> o'er hill and dale,
> Forest and field and flood, temples and towers,
> Cut shorter many a league,—

and placed him on an 'exceeding high mountain,' from whence he could be shown 'all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them,'—St Luke adds, 'in a moment of time.' It need hardly be said that no such mountain exists in the whole earth, much less in Palestine, to which the story most probably is intended to refer,—the earth being then conceived as a flat surface, on which 'all the kingdoms of the world' were spread out, and might be seen, therefore, it was supposed, from some very high peak in the midst. Even then, however, although the 'kingdoms' might have been shown, there would have been some difficulty in showing 'the glory of them.' And so, for instance, says Chrysostom :—

> *Again the devil took him up into an exceeding high mountain*,—that, forsooth, which the devil, who 'goes to and fro' in the whole earth, knew to be loftier than others; for, the higher the mountain, the more extended would the earth appear from it: whence it follows, *And he showed him all the kingdoms of the earth and the glory of them*. He showed them, not so that he should see the kingdoms themselves, or

> their cities, or peoples, or silver, or gold, but only the parts of the earth, in which each kingdom or city was situated; as if, suppose, I should ascend upon a lofty place, and, with finger stretched out, should say to thee, *There is Rome* or *There is Alexandria*, I should not be pointing out to thee the cities themselves, but the parts of the earth in which they are situated.

The consideration of such difficulties as these must arouse in any thoughtful mind—must have aroused frequently in the minds of many of you—most serious, or, it may be, anxious and painful doubts, as to the actual historical truth of the whole story. Accordingly, some pious writers have supposed that all these things occurred—not in actual outward act, but—in an *ecstasy*, or in a *nightly vision* or *dream*, when the bodily and mental powers of Jesus had been exhausted by his long fast, and so were prepared for such an occurrence. Thus Peter, we are told,—

> 'went up upon the housetop to pray about the sixth hour; and he became very hungry, and would have eaten; but while they made ready, he fell into a trance, and saw heaven opened, and a certain vessel descending unto him, as it had been a great sheet knit at the four corners, and let down to the earth; wherein were all manner of four-footed beasts of the earth, and wild beasts, and creeping things, and fowls of the air. And there came a voice to him, 'Rise, Peter, kill and eat.' But Peter said, 'Not so, Lord, for I have never eaten anything that is common or unclean.' And the voice spake unto him again the second time, 'What God hath cleansed, that call not thou common.' This was done thrice; and the vessel was received up again into heaven.' Acts x.9-16.

Here also, then, we have, not only a vision of outward things, but an actual conversation recorded, as taking place between Peter and the Divine speaker, and this being repeated thrice, corresponding to the three temptations in the passage before us. This view of the subject is taken by some of the Fathers, as Theodore of Mopsuestia and Cyprian, or the author of a discourse 'On the

fasting and temptations of Christ,' which is ascribed to Cyprian. While other modern writers suppose that the whole may be explained as taking place inwardly within the soul of Jesus,—a series of evil thoughts having been presented to his mind, and at once resolutely rejected by him, as temptations of the devil.

But the language of the Gospels does not allow of any of these explanations: they are merely vain attempts to retain the story, as part of an historical narrative, and yet get rid of some of the more perplexing phenomena in it. Just as idle are the efforts, which have been made by pious commentators, to explain away the statement, that from the top of a high mountain all the kingdoms of the earth could be seen, and all the glory of them. Thus the excellent Thomas Scott observes on this point,—

> This must have been *an illusion on the imagination,* over which Satan seems to have a peculiar influence. For it is *naturally impossible* that all the kingdoms of the world could be seen at once, as by far the greatest part of them must be beneath the visible horizon. They were, however, presented to the mind of Christ, as if he had seen them with his eyes, and fully beheld all the wealth, magnificence, and honour, which appear glorious in the eyes of men. *On Matt.* iv.8—11.

And he adds again (on Luke iv.5), with reference to the expression 'in a moment of time':—

> This circumstance is noted by Luke alone; and it confirms the opinion that the whole was *an illusion of the senses,* effected by 'the prince of the power of the air.'

But, what was 'naturally impossible' to Mr. Scott, and is so to us, knowing, as we do, that the earth is a globe, and that from the highest peak in the Himalayas the eye can only range over a circle of about two hundred miles in radius, further vision being shut off by the dip of the horizon, did not seem at all impossible to the writers of the Gospels, who looked upon the earth as a plane, and regarded that plane, most probably, as but of limited extent, with the ocean for its boundary.

Others reject the notion of an 'illusion on the imagination,' and regard the vision as a real one, but would confine

the view to the *land of promise,* as Dr Macknight, who says :—

> That this temptation was founded on a real, not an imaginary sight or vision of the kingdoms of the world, is evident from the devil's carrying our Lord up into an exceeding high mountain to view them. For, had it been either a delineation of the kingdoms in a map, or a visible representation of them in the air, or a vision of them in an ecstasy, or a sight of them in a dream, or a view of them by being carried round the globe in a moment of time, that is meant, it might have been done anywhere as well as on a high mountain.
>
> Nevertheless, a real sight of all the kingdoms of the world, from any high mountain whatsoever, may seem impossible, and therefore must be considered particularly. It is said, D. xxxiv.1-3, 'And Moses went up from the plains of Moab unto the mountains of Nebo, to the top of Pisgah, that is over against Jericho; and the Lord showed him all the land of Gilead unto Dan, and all Naphthali, and the land of Ephraim, and all the land of Judah unto the utmost sea, and the south, and the plain of the valley of Jericho, the city of palm-trees, unto Zoar.' . . . . . From the top of Nebo, Moses saw not only the country beyond Jordan, but the whole region on this side of the river, from north to south, and westward as far as the Mediterranean Sea. The mountain of Nebo, over against Jericho, whence Moses had the prospect of the whole land, may have been that from which the devil showed our Lord all the Kingdoms of the world, that is to say, the whole land of promise; for so the word is used in the *literal* sense, at least, of Rom.iv. 13, 'the promise that he should be heir of the *world* was not to Abraham, or to his seed, through the law, but through the righteousness of faith.' The land of promise, in its largest signification, reached from the Euphrates to the Mediterranean, east and west, and from Egypt on the south to beyond Sidon northwards. In Joshua's time, that extent of country contained thirty distinct principalities, besides the Philistines

> and the Sidonians. And even in our Lord's time it comprehended several kingdoms, some of which are mentioned, Luke iii.1. All these the devil pointed out to Jesus in the Temptation, taking particular notice of their glory, that is, their great and opulent cities, their rich fields, their hills covered with woods and cattle, their rivers rolling through fertile valleys, and washing the cities as they passed along.—*On the Gospels*, i.p.83.

But the promise 'to Abraham or to his seed,' of being 'heir of the world,' refers, as St Paul himself explains it in the very same chapter, to his being, as the great example of believers, the 'father of us all,'—

> 'as it is written, I have made thee a father of many nations'—'that the promise might be sure to all the seed, not to that only which is of the law, but to that also which is of the faith of Abraham.'

And surely it can hardly be supposed that the small country of Judea, with the tetrarchies of Galilee, Iturea, and Abilene, and the adjoining districts on the other side of the Jordan, could be spoken of as 'all the kingdoms of the world,' even if the view described in Deuteronomy, as seen by Moses before his death, had been itself possible—had been anything but a beautiful imagination of the Sacred Writer. Accordingly, the greatest English authority on the subject of the geography of Scripture, who has contributed a series of very valuable articles to *the Dictionary of the Bible*, writes thus of Mount Nebo:—

> It is so minutely described that it would seem impossible not to recognize it. . . . . And yet, notwithstanding the minuteness of this description, no one has yet succeeded in pointing out any spot which answers to Nebo. Viewed from the western side of Jordan, the mountains of Moab present the appearance of a wall or cliff, the upper line of which is almost straight and horizontal. Dr Robinson observes: 'There is no peak or point perceptibly higher than the rest; but all is one apparently level line of summit without peaks or gaps.' No summit can be distinguished, not the least approach to a peak: only

> here and there may be perceived light deflexions, as if the hand of the painter, who had traced this horizontal line upon the sky, had *trembled* in some places. 'Possibly,' continues Robinson, 'in travelling among these mountains, some isolated point or summit might be found, answering to the position and character of Nebo.' Two such points *have* been named. . . . . But these eminences are alike wanting in one main essential of the Nebo of Scripture, which is stated to have been 'facing Jericho.' . . . . Another requisite for the identification is that a view should be obtainable from the summit, corresponding to that prospect over the whole land, which Moses is said to have had from Mount Nebo: even though, as Professor Stanley has remarked, that was 'a view, which in its full extent *must have been imagined rather than actually seen.*'

Dean Stanley, in fact, tells us that, of the different places, which in the passage of Deuteronomy Jehovah is said to have shown to Moses, *Dan* was 'far beyond his sight,' *the utmost sea* and *the desert of the south* were 'unseen,' and *Zoar* was 'hardly visible'; and he adds, *Sinai*, &c., p. 301:—

> The *foreground* alone of the picture was clearly discernible; its dim distances were to be supplied by what was *beyond*, though suggested by what was *within*, the range of the actual prospect of the seer.

Accordingly, Matthew Henry, though he says, 'perhaps, it was Mount Pisgah, [supposed to be the top of Nebo], whence Moses, in communion with God, had all the kingdoms of Canaan showed him,' yet honestly admits, as follows:—

> Thence he might discover some of the kingdoms situate about Judea, though not *the glory of them*. But there was doubtless a juggle and a delusion of Satan's in it. It is probable that that which he showed him was but a landscape, an airy representation in a cloud, such as that great deceiver could easily frame and put together, setting forth, in proper and lively colours, the glories and splendid appearances of princes, and

> their robes and crowns, their retinue, equipage, and lifeguards, the pomps of thrones, and courts, and stately palaces, the sumptuous buildings in cities, the gardens and fields about the country-seats, with the various instances of their wealth, pleasure, and gaiety, so as might be most likely to strike the fancy, and excite the admiration and affection. Such was this show, and his taking of him up into a high mountain was but to *humour the thing*, and to colour the delusion; in which yet the blessed Jesus did not suffer himself to be imposed upon, but saw through the cheat; only he permitted Satan to take his own way, that his victory over him might be more illustrious.

And he adds (on Luke iv.5) :—

> That it was but a phantasm, that the devil here presented our Saviour with, as the prince of the power of the air, is confirmed by the circumstance which Luke here takes notice of, that it was done in a moment of time; whereas, if a man take a prospect of but one country, he must do it successively, must *turn himself round*, and take a view first of one part and then of another.

Upon the whole Dean Alford observes very justly, that the attempts to restrict the expression 'all the kingdoms of the world' to mean 'all the kingdoms of Palestine,'—which country was, in fact, *distinguished from* 'the world' of the Gentiles, as being God's peculiar portion and vineyard,—or to explain it of the 'Roman Empire,'—are 'mere subterfuges.' He himself, however, gets rid of the difficulty about the 'exceeding high mountain,' from which 'all the kingdoms of the world' might be seen, by merely saying, on Matt.iv.8 :—

> The inquiry where and what this mountain was, is entirely nugatory, no data being furnished by the text. The additional words in Luke, 'in a moment of time,' are valuable as pointing out to us clearly the *supernatural* character of this vision.

Dr Wordsworth, in his Commentary on the Gospels, both in Matthew and Luke, passes over this matter in judicious silence.

I believe that the difficulty in question is absolutely insurmountable. And, as the Church has brought this passage before us in the Services of this day so prominently, that you must expect me to take some account of it, I shall not shrink from the duty of telling you what I think about the matter. I do not regard it as right or reverential to pervert the plain meaning of the Scripture story, to explain away its language, or to shut my own eyes, and attempt to blind those of others, to the manifest difficulties, or rather impossibilities, which that story contains. It seems to me that the last course,—that of passing over in silence an admitted difficulty of the most serious importance,—is the most objectionable course of all to follow. I say, then, as most of you, I am sure, must yourselves feel, and must expect and wish me to say, that, in the face of the facts which I have mentioned, it is impossible to regard this narrative as historically true,—that it is probably one of those numerous mythical additions to the real history of the life of our Lord, which have been added in a later age, and were, no doubt, current in the time when the first three Gospels were composed. You have heard me formerly quote Dean Alford's statement, that—

> We owe our present Gospel [of Matthew] to a translator and compiler, similar in character, and in the nature of his labours, to those who have delivered to us the other two Gospels [of Mark and Luke]. Who this was we are totally unable to say. . . . . I conclude, therefore, that our present Gospel, in all its main portions, embraces the genuine contents of the memoirs, which the Apostle Matthew committed to writing in Hebrew. . . . . But the arrangement of the matter, and much supplementary and intercalary narrative, I believe to be owing to the researches of our Evangelistic Compiler. . . . . I cannot, however, subscribe to the opinion, that the translation and compilation was made under the superintendence of the Apostle himself.

I have given you before now some instances of the existence of mythical stories about our Lord and his doings, among the early Christians,—that is, among those who

lived about the beginning of the second century, two generations after the time of Christ. And any one who is at all acquainted with the apocryphal Gospels, and other writings of the post-apostolic age, not included in the Canon of Scripture, will be aware that they abound in such narratives, though for the most part extravagant and childish in the extreme.

But when we speak of the 'Canon of Scripture,'—the 'Canonical Books,'—what do we exactly mean? Our Sixth Article indeed gives a list of the 'Canonical Books of the Old and New Testament, of whose authority,' it says, 'was never any doubt in the Church.' But what is the fact with regard to them? The chief living writer upon the Canon of Scripture tells us* with respect to the *Syriac Version* of the New Testament, that—

> almost universal opinion assigns it to the most remote Christian antiquity—there is no sufficient reason to desert the opinion, which has obtained the sanction of the most competent scholars, that its formation is to be fixed within the first half of the second century.

Yet this Version omits the 2nd and 3rd Epistles of John, the 2nd of Peter, that of Jude, and the Revelations; and we are informed that—

> This Canon seems to have been generally maintained in the *Syrian Churches*, and in *those which depended on their authority*.

Again, the old *Latin Version*, which was used in the *Churches of Africa*, as the same author tells us, p.281,283—

> is recognized in the first Latin literature of the Church—can be traced back as far as the earliest records of Latin Christianity—every circumstance connected with it indicates the most remote antiquity—we shall find the date 170 A.D. as that before which the Version must have been made—how much more ancient it really is, cannot yet be discovered.

Yet, as he also says, *Dict. of the Bible*, p.1691—

> It seems certain that the Epistle to the Hebrews, that

* Westcott, *on the Canon of the New Testament*, p.254,264,265.

of James, and the 2nd Peter, did not form part of the original African Version.

We have here, then, all the Churches in *Syria* and *Africa*, in the most ancient times, for some centuries, agreeing in rejecting the 2nd Epistle of Peter, and rejecting separately *five* other Epistles, and the book of the Revelations.

If we pass to individual great names among the Fathers, we shall find similar results.

Eusebius, the great Ecclesiastical historian, who died A.D. 340, tells us, *Hist. Eccl.* iii.3 :—

> Among the disputed books, which are nevertheless well known and recognized by most, we class the epistle circulated under the name of James, and that of Jude, as well as the Second of Peter, and the so-called Second and Third of John, whether they really belong to the Evangelist, or possibly to another of the same name. We may rank as spurious the account of the Acts of Paul, the book called the Shepherd [of Hermas], and the Revelation of Peter. And, besides these, the epistle circulated under the name of Barnabas, and the Teaching of the Apostles, and, moreover, as I said, *the Apocalypse of John*, if such an opinion seem correct, which some, as I said, reject, while others reckon it among the books generally received.

Thus, even in the middle of the fourth century, this eminent writer, though bishop of Cæsarea, living therefore not very far from Ephesus, the centre (as is universally believed) of St John's labours,—a writer, too, who had made most careful inquiries, as far as he was able, into the previous history and existing documents of the Church,—is obliged to express a doubt whether the book of the *Revelations* must not be ranked with the 'spurious' apocryphal books.

Cyril, bishop of Jerusalem, who died A.D. 386, has left a catalogue of the Books of the New Testament, in which he includes all our Canonical Books, except the *Revelations*, and at the close of his list he says—

> But let all the rest be excluded [from the Canon, and be accounted] in the second rank.—Westcott, p.519.

Gregory, bishop of Nazianzus, again, who died A.D. 390—

> after enumerating the four Gospels, the Acts, fourteen epistles of St Paul, and seven Catholic epistles, says —'In these you have all the inspired books; if there be any book besides these, it is not among the genuine [Scriptures].'—Westcott, p.516 :—

and thus he too excludes the *Revelations*.

Another catalogue is given by his contemporary, Amphilochius, bishop of Iconium, who says :—

> Of the Catholic epistles some maintain that we ought to receive seven, and others three only, one of James, and one of Peter, and one of John. . . . The *Apocalypse* of John, again, some reckon [among the Scriptures] ; but still *the majority say it is spurious*.—Westcott, p.516.

Chrysostom, Theodore of Mopsuestia, and Theodoret of Cyrus in Syria, appear to have agreed with the Syrian Church in rejecting from the Canon of Holy Scripture the 2nd and 3rd of John, the 2nd of Peter, that of Jude, and the *Revelations*.

Junilius, an African bishop of the sixth century, says,—

> As to the *Apocalypse* of John, there is considerable doubt among the *Eastern* Christians :

and observe that the 'Eastern' Christians were just those, who might have been expected to be best acquainted with the genuine writings of the Apostle, St John, who had lived, and laboured, and died, in Asia.

Lastly, even in the ninth century, the catalogue of Nicephorus of Constantinople—

> contains all the books of the New Testament, with the exception of the *Apocalypse*, as received by the Church and accounted Canonical: but the Apocalypse is placed among the disputed writings, together with the Apocalypse of Peter, the Epistle of Barnabas, and the Gospel according to the Hebrews.—Westcott, p. 523.

You see plainly that in those days pious men were not terrified by those tremendous words, which are written at the end of the Apocalypse, and which, being placed ac-

cidentally at the end of our Bibles, because the book of Revelations is placed last, have deterred many from even venturing to entertain a doubt of its authenticity:—

> 'For I testify unto every man, that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book; and, if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book.'—Rev.xxii.18,19.

How often have these words been expounded as a sort of Divine seal, set upon the whole Bible,—as a guarantee for the infallible truth of all its 'words,' from the first of Genesis to the last of Revelations! You see, however, that in the first three, five, or even nine centuries, not only some of the most eminent Fathers, but whole Churches, rejected the Apocalypse altogether, without any superstitious apprehension of the consequences. They knew that the words in question applied only to the Apocalypse itself, not to the other writings of the Bible,—that they were meant by the writer, whoever he may have been, to act as a protection for the work which he had completed, against the corruptions and interpolations of an age abounding in forgeries,—and they doubted very much, or rather they disbelieved, that the writer was St John the Apostle. Other Fathers, it is true, held that the Apocalypse *was* part of the Canon, and the work of the Apostle John,—as Irenæus, Clement of Alexandria, Tertullian, Origen, Cyprian. But these represent only a difference of opinion upon the subject. And of the only three catalogues of Canonical Books, which have been ratified by Church Councils, (i) that of the Council of Laodicea, 363 A.D., confirmed by the Council of Chalcedon, does *not* contain the Apocalypse,—(ii) that of the Council of Carthage, about thirty years later, A.D. 397, *does* contain it,—while (iii) the last of what are called 'the Apostolical Canons,' which were confirmed by the Council held at Constantinople in the year 592 A.D., also omits it, but inserts, as Holy Scripture, the two epistles of Clement of Rome. I do not quote these last as of any great author-

ity; for the fact is, that none of the great Church Councils has considered at all the question of the Canon of Scripture. But, from all that I have said, you now see sufficiently how little they know about the subject,—or, if they know, how little they have considered it, — who dogmatise so positively about the absolute infallibility of Scripture, and even speak of the Bible as 'being read in Heaven.'

But, if some of our present books were rejected by not a few of the Fathers and by whole Churches, other books, which we now reject, were then regarded by many as Canonical. The 'Apostolical Canons,' as we have just seen, reckoned with the Scriptures the two epistles of Clement of Rome, while rejecting the Apocalypse. Clement of Alexandria and Origen both quote as Scripture the Epistle of Barnabas, as Irenæus and Origen quote the Shepherd of Hermas. Once more, there exists a remarkable document, discovered at Milan about the middle of the last century, which is described as—

> a precious relic of great antiquity, of the greatest interest and importance, the date of which cannot be placed much later than 170 A.D.:—

and it is added (Westcott, p.236):—

> Internal evidence fully confirms its claim to this high antiquity; and it may be regarded on the whole as a summary of the opinion of the Western Church on the Canon *shortly after the middle of the second century.*

But this list includes in the number of Canonical books the 'Revelation of Peter' as well as that of John, saying—

> We receive, moreover, the Apocalypses of John and Peter only, which [latter] some of our body will not have read in the Church.

And this *very ancient* document shows also how rapidly mythical stories were generated even in those early days; for this is the account which it gives of the origin of the Gospel of St John:—

> At the entreaties of his fellow-disciples and bishops, John said: 'Fast with me for three days from this time; and, whatever shall be revealed to each of us, whether it be favourable to my writing or not, let us

> relate it to one another.' On the same night it was revealed to Andrew, one of the Apostles, that John should relate all things in his own name, aided by the revision of all.

You will remember also that other legend which Justin Martyr quotes, as an actual fact in the history of our Lord, how that, when he was baptized, as he went *down* into the water, 'a fire was kindled in the Jordan.' In one of the Apocryphal Gospels, we find a different version of the same story:—

> as he went *up* out of the water, the heavens were opened . . . . . and forthwith a great light shone around the place.

But an ancient Syriac liturgy gives a more simple and natural account, which is apparently the basis of the whole marvellous story:—

> At the moment of his ascent from the waters, *the sun inclined its rays*—

that is, apparently, the sunlight shone upon him, and irradiated his person.

With such examples as these before us, we can scarcely doubt that the legend in the text,—with its evil spirit, speaking and visible, carrying our Lord through the air, just as we may read in many an Oriental story,—setting him upon a pinnacle of the temple, and then upon the 'exceeding high mountain,' from which 'all the kingdoms of the world could be seen,'—has had a similar origin in the imaginations of devout men. As such, however, it may not have been without a real substantial basis in the actual life of our Lord. When about to enter on the great work to which he felt his spirit moved,—when about to begin his public ministry—

> preaching the Gospel of the Kingdom of God and saying, 'The time is fulfilled, and the Kingdom of God is at hand; repent ye, and believe the Gospel,'—

when about to go forth 'in the power of the Spirit' to discharge that high mission, to which he knew that he was called—

> 'The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because He hath

> anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor, He hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord,'—

such thoughts as these, which are expressed in the three temptations, may really have been presented to his mind, and rejected at once by his faithful spirit, with some such replies and quotations of Scripture as are here recorded, whether actually expressed in words, or spoken only within the heart, in the silent musings of the soul. Or else, to devout minds, considering in later days the work on which the Christ was now about to enter, it must have seemed inevitable that, as a Son of Man, he would be tempted with some such thoughts as these,—thoughts which must certainly more or less beset the mind of every one, who is called to a greater work in life than others, summoned to discharge more arduous duties, endowed with special capabilities, exposed to special dangers.

The time fails me now to discuss in a proper manner this practical view of the present subject, and draw the needful lessons for our own soul's good. By God's help we will return to consider this part of the question this evening.

XXI.

THE TEMPTATIONS OF A CHRISTIAN.

PREACHED ON SUNDAY EVENING, FEB. 18, 1866, IN THE CATHEDRAL, MARITZBURG.

MATT. IV. 1.

'THEN WAS JESUS LED UP OF THE SPIRIT INTO THE WILDERNESS, TO BE TEMPTED OF THE DEVIL.'

THIS passage has been brought before us expressly in the Gospel of this day, and has been commended therefore to our special consideration at this time. I pointed out this morning the difficulties in the narrative of Our Lord's Temptation, which make it impossible, in a reasoning and reflecting age like this, to receive it as a literal record of historical fact. Thus we have here the Evil Spirit appearing in visible form; and accordingly our great poet Milton's imagination fills up what is left untold in the Bible, and describes his appearance, first, as that of—

> An aged man, in rural weeds,
> Following, as seemed, the quest of some stray ewe,
> Or withered sticks to gather;—

then afterwards, he says—

> A man before him stood,
> Not rustic as before, but seemlier clad,
> As one in city, or court, or palace bred.

We have the Evil One described as carrying off our Lord through the air, and setting him on a pinnacle of the temple, which Milton also realizes thus:—

> So saying, he caught him up, and, without wing
> Of hippogriff, bore through the air sublime,
> Over the wilderness and o'er the plain,
> Till underneath them fair Jerusalem,

> The holy city, lifted high her towers,
> And higher yet the glorious temple rear'd
> Her pile, far off appearing like a mount
> Of alabaster, topt with golden spires.
> There, on the highest pinnacle, he set
> The Son of God.

Then, we read, he took him up into an 'exceeding high mountain,' and showed him from thence 'all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them,'—a thing which appeared not altogether inconceivable to those, who thought of the surface of the earth being stretched out as a flat plane, but which we, whom God has taught to know that the earth is a sphere, see now to be impossible.

I showed how the most pious commentators betray their consciousness of these difficulties, by the attempts they make to evade or explain them away. Some, indeed, find it the wisest plan to say nothing about them, as Dr Wordsworth, who passes over the 'high mountain' in perfect silence, or the late Archbishop Sumner, who merely says in a note:

> With regard to the manner in which this temptation was carried on, many inquiries might be raised, and nothing certain can be replied. It is among the things not clearly explained, and left to our faith.

Others, more adventurous, attempt some kind of explanation, as Milton, who speaks of the wondrous scene—

> presented to his eyes,
> By what strange paradox, or optic skill
> Of vision, multiplied through air, or glass
> Of telescope, were curious to inquire.

Archbishop Leighton suggests some kind of 'false representation,' especially, as he says, 'to make up the third temptation, with the advantage of a high mountain': but his words are as follows:—

> The second and third temptations, whether they were by *change of place* or *representation of species* [appearances], as I think it cannot be forcibly either concluded or refuted either way, so it is not of much benefit or importance that it should be either way. The notion of throwing him down headlong seems to me with the strongest appearance to incline to a real

standing on the place; for, if not, then it was necessary that both the place and the steepness should not only be represented to our Saviour's imagination, but that he should really believe that he was there; otherwise the temptation of casting himself down from thence were altogether null, and could have had no place. Nor, though it may be granted that he might suffer a false representation,—somewhat of which must likely be allowed, to make up the temptation, with the advantage of a high mountain,—yet, whether we may fairly admit in our Saviour an apprehension of such a false representation as true, should be considered.

Bishop Hall, too, is perplexed with the earth's rotundity:—

'Wherefore is Christ carried up so high, but for prospect? If the kingdoms of the earth and their glory were only to be presented to his imagination, the valley would have served; if to the outward sense, no hill could suffice. Circular bodies, though small, cannot be seen at once. This show was made to both: divers kingdoms, *lying round about Judea*, were represented to the eye,—the glory of them to the imagination.

Thus Bishop Hall has recourse to what Dean Alford justly calls a 'mere subterfuge,'—that of explaining 'all the kingdoms of the world' to mean the petty principalities 'lying about Judea.' But, as we heard this morning, the most eminent modern Biblical geographers tell us that even such a view, as is here supposed, 'must have been imagined rather than actually seen.' There is no 'high mountain,' from which the kingdoms could all have been seen,—much less 'the glory of them,' which even Bishop Hall admits must have been shown to the 'imagination' only.

But the most striking instance in recent times of the phenomenon to which I am referring is that of the Archbishop (Thomson) of York in his life of Jesus Christ, lately published in the *Dictionary of the Bible*, in which he first tells us, i.p.1042:—

Some suppose the account before us to describe what takes place in a vision or ecstasy of our Lord; so that

> both the temptation and its answer arise from within. Others think that the temptation was suggested from within, but in a state, not of sleep or ecstasy, but of complete consciousness. Others consider this narrative to have been a parable of our Lord, of which he has made himself the subject. All these suppositions set aside the historical testimony of the Gospels. . . The story is that of a *fact*, hard indeed to be understood, but not to be made easier by explanations, such as would *invalidate the only testimony on which it rests.*

After this plain statement, it is certainly surprising to find that the Archbishop is driven himself to 'make easier' the story by 'explanations' of the following kind:—

> In the second temptation, *it is not probable that they left the wilderness* (!), but that Satan was allowed to *suggest to our Lord's mind* the place, and the marvel that would be wrought there:—

that is to say, the devil did *not* carry him through the air, did not really, as the Bible says, 'take him up into the holy city, and set him on a pinnacle of the temple,' or rather, 'set him,' as the Archbishop says—

> on the lofty porch that overhung the valley of Kedron, where the steep side of the valley was added to the height of the temple, and made a depth that the eye could scarcely have borne to look upon—

but only 'suggested to our Lord's mind' the scene, and what he had to do there: 'they stood' on that porch, says the Archbishop, but it was only in imagination: 'it is not probable that they left the wilderness.' I need hardly remind you how this is at variance with the very reasonable words of Archbishop Leighton just quoted.

But the Archbishop proceeds to 'make easier' in this way the story of the third temptation:—

> In the third temptation it is not asserted that there is any mountain, from which the eyes of common men can see the world and its kingdoms at once displayed. It was with the *mental* vision of One, who knew all things, that these kingdoms and their glory were seen.

But as Bishop Hall says—

Wherefore is Christ carried up so high, except for prospect?—

What need of his being taken to the top of a mountain,—an 'exceeding high mountain,'—if he saw 'all the kingdoms of the world and their glory, with the mental vision of One who knew all things,'—and could have seen them as well in any place whatever,—since, as Bishop Hall says, 'the valley would have served as well'? Perhaps, however, here also,—in the case of the *third* temptation, as well as the second—the Archbishop, though he does not actually say so, would teach that 'it is not probable that they left the wilderness,' but that 'Satan was allowed to suggest to our Lord's mind' the top of an 'exceeding high mountain,' and the view of all the kingdoms of the world that could be seen from it,—be seen, however, only 'with the mental vision of One who knew all things.'

It appears to me that this is only trifling with the Scripture, and sowing largely the seeds of unbelief—of the worst kind of unbelief. Far better will it be,—far less injurious to our moral sense, to our sense of truthfulness and honesty,—far more conducive to a spirit of devout reverence for what is excellent, to a firm belief in what is really God's Word, in the Bible,—that we should say at once that this narrative cannot be a narrative of actual fact: it is one of those numerous mythical or legendary additions to the true story of the life of our Lord, which the devout imaginations of his followers have developed in later days, while pondering in pious thought upon his work when on earth. When Jesus was about to enter on that work, in the full consciousness of His Divine Call to be the Messiah of his people, and to tell out plainly the Father's Love to the children of men, they seem to have thought that he must have been exposed to such temptations as these,—he must in the Divine Strength have overcome them. The forty days' fasting—the personal appearance of the Tempter—his words, his acts, and the answers by which his assaults were repelled,—these are but the colouring—the outward drapery, in which the substantial underlying fact was clothed, in accordance with the prevalent ideas of the time. The real fact, which lies at the basis of the narrative, is the fact of human ex-

perience, that all those who are called in the Providence of God to higher work, and gifted with greater powers, than others of their brethren, are exposed to special trials of their faithfulness, such as these which are here described, —such as these substantially, however differing in outward form.

For it is not true, as it seems to me, that the temptations of our Lord can be taken as the type of *all our* temptations: they are not of such a nature as fairly to include all manner of temptations that are common to Man. Archbishop Thomson says indeed:—

> The three temptations are addressed to *the* three forms, in which the disease of sin makes its appearance on the soul—to the solace of sense, and the love of praise, and the desire of gain:

and he refers to St John's words, 1 Jo.ii.16, where he speaks of 'the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life.' But, though the third temptation, with its promise of the gift of 'all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them,' may properly be regarded as a temptation to indulge the 'pride of life,' yet surely the changing stones into bread, to satisfy the cravings of hunger, can scarce be regarded as gratifying 'the lust of the flesh'; nor does the suggestion made to Jesus to throw himself down from the temple-height, in trust that the angels would bear him up, connect itself naturally with the 'lust of the eye,' though it may be fairly coupled with that which the Archbishop substitutes for it, the 'love of praise.' But it seems to be a farfetched and vain attempt, to gather all human temptations to sin under these three heads,—just as much so as to suppose that all human offences are forbidden by the Ten Commandments. You may stretch their meaning unnaturally to make them do so; as, of course, the first Command, 'Thou shalt have none other gods but me,' may be said to include all the rest. But, except by some such strained interpretation, it is hard to see under what Command should be brought the duty not to lie, not to be a glutton or a drunkard, not to be proud, overbearing, or selfish.

So, too, we often say that our Lord's Example is to be the guide to us in all our duties of life. And so indeed it

should be,—yet not in the way that many seem to suppose, by his having actually shared in the performance of those duties, and resisted the temptations more especially connected with them. Such persons, however, forget that he has left us no example of the faithful discharge of some of the commonest offices of life. Of his childhood and boyhood we know scarcely anything: of his youth we know nothing. We have very little to show us how he acted as a son or a brother: we have no example in his life of a husband or a parent,—no exact pattern for students or men of business, for artisans, domestic servants, village labourers, for professional men, soldiers, or statesmen. The duties of later middle life and of old age were not discharged by him: the lot of the noble, wealthy, and powerful was not experienced by him, nor that of the pauper in the poorhouse, of the prisoner immured for years in the dungeon of the oppressor, of the patient racked with pain, or worn with lingering disease, in the wards of the hospital. The Example, which he has actually given us in the Bible, is chiefly that of an active ministry of at most three years in the prime of life, under circumstances which can never happen again in the history of the world; and that Example in any case is properly suited for boys, young lads, or men, and not for girls, maidens, or women.

How is it, then, that we are able at once to appeal to Christ's Example, as the perfect model of what human beings ought to be, or ought to do, under all circumstances? It is because we appeal to the *spirit* of his life,—to the *principle* which ruled it,—to that conformity to the perfect Will of God, that desire to please his heavenly Father, that surrender of his own will to God's Will, which he manifested on all occasions. And, taught as we are ourselves by the Divine Word,—enlightened by the Light which is the Life of men,—we are able in our own minds to fill up that which is wanting, for our actual guidance amidst the duties of life,—to say to ourselves, in different situations, 'In this way Christ would act or would have acted.' We are able to set before us an ideal Christ, a perfect image of the Divine Man. That image of perfect beauty and holiness—of the perfect Man,—which we thus by Divine grace behold each in our own mind,—is not set before us at full length in the Gospels; nor could

it possibly be: no record of his life could have supplied minutely all the details needed for this purpose,—for setting a mere *copy*, which we are closely to follow in all our different relations of life,—even if our Lord had actually entered into human relationships more fully than he has done. It is, I repeat, to the spirit of his life—to the principle which ruled it—that we must be appealing continually, day by day, and hour by hour, if we would 'put on Christ'—put on the Christian spirit—act as Christians should do, in a thousand different situations and relations, in which our Lord, as his life is recorded in the Gospels, never found himself. We have, in short, 'the type of perfect in our mind'; though the vision of human perfection which we thus see,—the vision of purity, and righteousness, and love,—will not be the same to different persons, will differ according to their circumstances, according to the point of view from which they behold it,—as no two persons see identically the same rainbow. The father or mother will regard it from one point of view, the son or daughter from another; the husband and the wife, the old and the young, the rich and the poor—each living man, according to the measure of the light vouchsafed to him, is enabled to see, for his own guidance in the path of duty, that perfect ideal which suits his own circumstances, to have a vision more or less clear, according to the grace already vouchsafed to him, and the use which he has made of it, of that Divine-Human perfection, which answers to the mind of the Creator,—in the image of which we were created, and according to which He would have us new-created.

The Example, then, of Christ is not less valuable to us, because the details of his life are few, and leave many and most important points of our lives without models of conduct. Our following of any model, to be true, to be of any worth, must not be an imitation of certain acts, of certain demeanour, appropriate to this or that situation or relation, in which as human beings we may be placed. It is the *heart* which God looks at; and, if our hearts are conformed to that of the Son of Man,—if the same spirit of filial trust, obedience, and devotion, which animated him, and showed itself as much in one circumstance as another, dwells in us,—it will also shine out in our lives. We must

study, therefore, his words and deeds, in order to catch that spirit,—not with the notion, which has prevailed in some ages of the Church, of attempting a mere external imitation of him. Christ is our great Example—because he came not to do his own will, but the will of the Father who sent him,—because he sought not his own glory, but in all that concerned him was simply obedient, leaving his cause in God's hands,—because he bore witness for the Truth on all occasions, regardless of consequences.

So here the Example of Christ in these temptations will not apply directly to all the circumstances of our lives: it applies immediately only to those who are called, as he was, to some special duty of more than ordinary difficulty, exposed to special dangers, endowed with special powers. As Leighton says:—

> Thus look to be assailed, when thou art to be engaged in any special service. Each according to his place will find this. When he is upon some purpose of honouring God in any particular undertaking or course and is nearest the performance, then shall the strength of hell be mustered up against him.

What, then, is the essence of these three temptations?

(i) In the first, Christ is tempted to *distrust*,—to abandon his child-like confidence in his heavenly Father, that firm reliance in God's providential care, that calm dependence on God's ever-watchful love, which is the characteristic of a true believer, and to take, of his own accord, irregular means to relieve himself in his present necessities.

> 'The Tempter came to him and said, If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread.'

As I have said, we cannot regard this narrative as literally and historically true. Yet the thought, which led to its being written, was a true one,—a thought generated in the depth of human consciousness, and realized by human experience. Whoever wrote this passage of Scripture assuredly wrote it, not without a deep knowledge of human nature, nor without the Divine teaching of the Spirit of God. For it is true that men, who are called to great and difficult duties in life, are tempted in this way,—it is one of the first temptations which beset them,—to forsake

the plain path of patient faith and duty, and betake themselves to their own resources, for some improper means of relieving their difficulties. When they have been, as it were, 'led away into the wilderness,'—when they have 'fasted long' and are 'hungered,'—when human praise, human help, human comfort and support, have long been withheld from them, when they feel faint for the want of that 'bread,' which the soul of every man naturally desires, in the sympathy and co-operation of his fellows,—it is a sore temptation to make 'bread' for themselves,—to turn aside out of the plain straightforward path of duty, of patient waiting upon God, and to use the very powers, which are entrusted to them for God's work, in labours of some other, lower, kind, which shall bring them perhaps men's sympathy, or, at least, which shall secure their indifference, and enable them to stay for a time the craving of the soul for the 'bread' of human fellowship.

And the only thought which answers to such suggestions, is that which is embodied in the words here ascribed to our Lord :—

> 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.'

It is not the bread of this life only, by which the spirit of a true living man requires to be fed. The sense of God's Favour and Approval, which is 'better than the life itself,' —the consciousness of doing His Will, or working His Work,—the strength supplied by feeding on God's Word, the Word of Truth, in the heart,—with these the soul of the true child of God will be sustained, when all earthly comforts and supports may fail him.

> God will certainly give us bread; and till He does, we can live by the breath of His mouth, by the Word of God, by the Light of His countenance, by the refreshment of His promises.—Jeremy Taylor.

Human love—human praise—human fellowship—are things desirable : but they are not all that he needs, and they are nothing without the love and praise and fellowship of God. And these will make amends abundantly for the loss of the rest—if indeed they are lost : for it may be that they are but withheld for a season, and in God's own time shall be freely granted.

(ii) And *then* may come the second temptation—that to *presumption*:—

> 'If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down: for it is written, He shall give his angels charge concerning thee, and in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone.'

When a man feels that he *has* power committed to him,—that he can do work in the world,—can influence the minds of others,—can have a band of admirers and followers,—can form a 'Party,'—then is he tempted to forget the end for which he is called,—the one only object for which he is endowed with the powers entrusted to him,—to do God's Work, to promote God's Glory, and to serve his fellow-men. He is tempted to seek his own Glory, not God's,—to think much of himself and his doings,—to presume upon God's gifts,—instead of walking in the child-like spirit of dependence upon God, in awe and obedience, in lowliness, watchfulness, and prayer, 'purifying himself daily, even as He is pure'! He is tempted to live a careless, undevout life, 'casting himself down' into habits of self-indulgence and sin, in the hope that God's Angels of Goodness—God's Fatherly Mercies—will bear him up from harm.

The answer is,—

> 'Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God.'

'It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the Living God.' Because He *is* our Father,—because He loves us,—He will not suffer us thus to sin, without laying heavily upon us the rod of His Divine Displeasure. Let a child-like reverence and fear, then, possess our souls, as well as a child-like faith and love, that we may neither distrust, when we are weak and faint, nor presume, when we are full and strong, but—

> 'receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, may have grace whereby we may, serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear: for our God is a Devouring Fire.'

(iii) 'That we may serve God.' There is yet another temptation, which besets the path of such a man,—not now to distrust God,—not now to presume on God's Good-

ness,—but to throw up the work of God altogether,—to be wearied with its difficulties,—to be impatient of its restraints,—and to sink back into an indolent content with the ordinary routine of life, with its ease, enjoyment, pleasures, and rewards, abandoning for these the high and holy task to which his God has called him,—selling his glorious privileges as God's servant for a mess of this world's pottage.

> 'All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me.'

Here, too, the answer comes at once:—

> 'It is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve.'

In Him alone we 'move and have our being': for Him we live: for His pleasure we 'are, and were created.' How truly it ennobles every act of life,—the lowest as well as the greatest,—to know that we are acting as the servants of God,—that in that one simple fact is involved our own truest good,—our assurance of support, protection, and blessing,—as well as His Glory! To have but one thought daily, as the ruling principle of life, how best to do the Will of God in all things, regardless of this world's praise or blame, seeking only to approve himself to Him who 'seeth in secret and shall reward openly,'—this was our Master's law, as it must be ours, if we would be his true disciples.

For, though these three temptations do not include directly all temptations, that may beset us in those more common paths of life, which we ourselves may be called to tread, yet the spirit in which our Lord is here said to have resisted these,—in which undoubtedly he did resist them, if ever, or whenever, he was beset by them,—must be that in which, as true Christians, we should overcome all. This course, indeed, will not bring to our feet the riches and wealth of the world, its power and influence, 'all the kingdoms and the glory of them.' Most probably, it will not bring us peace on earth, bright tokens of success, the praise and applause even of the good, much less the universal love of our fellow-men. It brought not these to Christ himself: it brought to him apparent disappointment, discouragement, failure, calumny and enmity, the scourge

and the cross. And what the Master bore, the servant must expect likewise. Hear how strikingly one (the Rev. F. W. Robertson), who has only recently been called to his rest, after a short life of faithful labour, has written on this point, in answer to a friend who had hinted that he 'courted popularity':—

> If he suppose that the desire to discern 'the soul of goodness in things evil,' to recognise the Truth which lies at the root of error, and to assimilate the good in all sects and all men, rather than magnify the evil, is a plan which will conciliate the regard of all, secure a man's peace, 'and of course bring with it great popularity with the multitude,' I can earnestly assure him that, whenever he will try the experiment, he will find out his mistake. He will, perhaps, then see a new light reflected upon the expression, 'when I speak peace, they make them ready for the battle.' He will find himself, to his painful surprise, charged on the one hand for his earnestness with heresy, on the other for his charity with latitudinarianism. His desire to exalt the spirit will be construed into an irreverence for the letter, his setting light by maxims into a want of zeal for principles, his distinction between rules and spirit into lawlessness. He will find his attempts to love men, and his yearnings for their sympathy, met by suspicions of his motives and malignant slanders upon his life. His passionate desire to reach ideas instead of words, and get to the root of what men mean, he will find treated, even by those who think that they are candid, as the gratification of a 'literary taste,' and the affectation of a 'philosophic height' above the strife of human existence. I would not recommend him to try that 'philosophic height,' which he thinks so self-indulgent, unless he has the hardihood to face the keenest winds that blow over all lonely places, whether lonely heights or lonely flats. If he can steel his heart against suspicion,—if he can dare to be pronounced dangerous by the ignorant, hinted at by his brethren in public, and warned against in private,—if he can resolve to be struck on every side and not to strike again,

> giving all quarter and asking none,—if he can struggle in the dark, with the prayer for light upon his lips, in silence and alone,—then let him adopt the line which seems so easy, and be fair and generous and chivalrous to all.

This was the experience of one, who in our day fought in the first ranks of the army of Christ, and drank of the cup which his Master drank of. We, in our lower posts of duty, may never be called to share these trials,—at least, in any such measure as this. But, if we are so called, any one of us, in any degree, we must remember the lessons which we are taught by this account of our Lord's Temptation. We are not to distrust the love and faithfulness of Him who has called us to this warfare. Nor are we to presume upon the strength which He gives us, upon the fact that His Mighty Arm supports us. Nor are we to desert our post, lay down our arms, shrink back from the fight, because the conflict may be long and fierce, and the result, to the eye of sense, may be doubtful and uncertain. It is enough for us to know that the same voice that said, 'Think not that I am come to send peace on earth; I came not to send peace, but a sword'—has said also, 'Peace I leave with you—my peace I give unto you,' —the 'peace of God,' which 'passeth all understanding.'

XXII.

DEMONIACAL POSSESSION.

PREACHED ON SUNDAY MORNING, FEB. 25, 1866, IN THE CATHEDRAL, MARITZBURG.

LUKE VIII. 33.

'THEN WENT THE DEVILS OUT OF THE MAN, AND ENTERED INTO THE SWINE; AND THE HERD RAN VIOLENTLY DOWN A STEEP PLACE INTO THE LAKE, AND WERE CHOKED.'

WE have here a narrative, almost as perplexing to the reason of an intelligent man, as that which we were considering last Sunday. In fact, both the Gospel of the day and the Second Lesson for this Morning's Service bring before us distinctly the question of demoniacal possession. I feel that it would be wrong to pass by it or evade it,—that you will expect me to tell you honestly what is to be said upon this question, as upon others, so as to retain our hold of faith upon the essence of the Gospel narrative,—the revelation which it brings us of the Love of God to Man, declared and ministered in the life and death of our Lord,—and yet shake off the incubus of that traditionary system of religious belief, which prevents our standing up upon our feet as men, breathing joyously the health-giving air, the fresh inspiring life, of this our day, rejoicing in the liberty wherewith Christ has made us free.

The subject, in fact, of the text, is closely connected with that of last Sunday: and, as then we heard how Jesus was 'led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil,' so here we read of the man possessed that he 'often brake his bands, and was driven of the devil into the wilderness.' Here also, as there, we have some minor discrepancies,—and one remarkable one,—between the

story as recorded by Mark and Luke, and that which we find in Matthew. For the latter says—

> 'There met him *two* possessed with devils, coming out of the tombs, exceeding fierce, so that no man might pass by that way. And, behold, they cried out, saying, What have we to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of God? Art thou come hither to torment us before the time?'

whereas the former both speak of *one* demoniac only, and in such a way as really to exclude the notion of another. Thus, for instance, St Luke says:—

> 'There met him a certain man of the city, which had devils a long time, and ware no clothes, neither abode in a house, but in the tombs. When he saw Jesus, he cried out, and fell down before him, and with a loud voice said, 'What have I to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of God Most High? I beseech thee, torment me not.' And Jesus asked him, saying, 'What is thy name?' And he said 'Legion'—because many devils had entered into him.'

In fact, Dean Alford admits that the first account is, most probably, inaccurate; and supposes that the expressions in Mark and Luke, which imply a plurality of *demons* possessing one man, led to the mention in Matthew of a plurality of *persons*. He says, on Matt.viii.28:—

> In Mark v.2 and Luke viii.27 but *one* is mentioned, [whereas in Matt.viii.28 we have *two* demoniacs spoken of.] . . . The [expression] 'for we are many,' of Mark, is worth noticing, in connexion with the discrepancy of number in the two accounts, as perhaps *the origin of more than one being mentioned in the text* [of Matthew].

And, again, on Mark v.2 he notes:—

> 'For we are many' has perhaps given rise to the report of *two* demoniacs in Matthew.

And still more plainly, he writes on Luke viii.27:—

> I put to any reader the question, whether it were possible for either Mark or Luke to have drawn up their account from Matthew, or with Matthew before them,

> seeing that he mentions *two possessed* throughout. Would no notice be taken of this? Then, indeed, would the Evangelists be but poor witnesses to the truth, if they could consciously allow such a discrepancy to go forth. I believe that the *plurality of the demons*, in the *accurate* accounts of Mark and Luke, is the real key to the *duality of persons*, in the evidently not so full or *precise* account of Matthew.

As it is plain from the Gospel narrative, Luke vi.13-16, that Matthew had already been called to the apostolic office, and was therefore one of the disciples who, we are told, crossed the sea with their Master to the country of the Gadarenes, where this man possessed with demons met them,—as Matthew, therefore, must have been present on this occasion, and personally witnessed all that past,—it follows that, if the account in Matthew, as Dean Alford believes, is inaccurate, it cannot have been written by Matthew himself,—a fact which agrees, as you remember, with the Dean's conclusion, which I have frequently quoted, *viz.*, that 'we owe our present Gospel' of St Matthew to an unknown 'translator and compiler,' and that even this translation and compilation was not 'made under the superintendence of the Apostle himself.' But something more follows than this. For the Dean has also asserted that this compiler,—

> where he could not *satisfactorily to himself* ascertain what was the Apostle's testimony, has not supplied the narrative from other sources, but has *omitted the fact.*

I have said that this was only a conjecture, in respect of which there might be a difference of opinion. And this much at all events appears, from the Dean's own admissions, that the mere fact of this compiler's having *satisfied himself*, as to what was 'the Apostle's testimony, is no guarantee to us that he has actually given us that testimony correctly. For, in the case before us, according to the Dean's own view, he cannot have given it correctly, and, if not in this case, then probably not in others. In short, there is nothing whatever to show that this unknown translator and compiler, probably living long after the time of Christ and his Apostles, did not gather up, together

with those genuine memoirs by St Matthew, which he is believed to have translated, any other floating traditionary stories about the sayings and doings of our Lord, which in that latter age existed, and which *he himself believed* to be true. I say 'perhaps living long after the time of Christ and his Apostles'; for these again are Dean Alford's words:—

> At what time the Greek version or compilation was made we are entirely ignorant. From what has been said above, I should be disposed to place it *not very close to the writing of the Gospel itself*, nor necessarily before the destruction of Jerusalem. It would form no part of the design of the compiler to insert notices of his own of a historical kind. And the intervention of the destruction of Jerusalem, and the consequent dispersion of the Jewish converts, would very much tend to throw the memoirs and testimony of the Apostle into that disjointed and fragmentary state, in which we now find them. We must also suppose that the death, or at all events the special departure into distant parts, of Matthew himself had taken place before our compiler drew up the present Greek Gospel.

But the moral difficulties of the story are far greater than the critical. The very idea of a demon—much more of a legion of demons, all at the same time—possessing the soul of a man, is repugnant to all our modern notions, and contrary to all modern experience. We never speak now-a-days, except in a metaphorical sense, of a person being 'possessed with a devil';—we never think—at least in Protestant countries—of going to have a devil exorcised. In former times, indeed, such practices were very common. Thus Josephus gives us the following account of an exorcism which he witnessed in the very age of the Apostles. He is speaking of the wisdom of Solomon, and says, *Ant.* II.viii.5:—

> God also enabled him to learn that skill which expels demons, which is a science useful and sanative to men. He composed certain incantations also by which distempers are alleviated. And he left behind him the manner of using exorcisms, by which they drive away

> demons, so that they never return. And this method of cure is of great force unto this day. For I have seen a certain man of my own country, whose name was Eleazar, releasing the people that were demoniacal in the presence of Vespasian and his sons and his captains, and the whole multitude of his soldiers. The manner of the cure was this. He put a ring, that had a root of one of those sorts mentioned by Solomon, to the nostrils of the demoniac, after which he drew out the demon through his nostrils; and, when the man fell down immediately, he abjured him to return unto him no more, making still mention of Solomon, and reciting the incantations which he composed. And when Eleazar would persuade and demonstrate to the spectators that he had such a power, he set a little way off a cup or basin full of water, and commanded the demon, as he went out of the man, to overturn it, and thereby to let the spectators know that he had left the man; and, when this was done, the skill and wisdom of Solomon was shown very manifestly.

In the ancient Church there was a regular class of ordained clergy, whose business it was to exorcise evil spirits. In the first three centuries, it seems, bishops and presbyters were the usual exorcists; and Justin Martyr argues with the Jew Trypho, as follows, c.85 :—

> For by the name of this same Son of God and first-born of every creature, who was born of a virgin and became a man subject to suffering, and was crucified under Pontius Pilate by your people, and died, and rose again from the dead, and went up into heaven, every demon, when exorcised, is conquered and subjected. Whereas, if ye exorcise by any name of those who have been born among you, kings, or righteous men, or prophets, or patriarchs, not one of the demons will be subjected; though, if any of you should exorcise by the God of Abraham and the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob, perhaps it would be subjected.

Justin Martyr seems here to have forgotten the powerful name of Solomon. In another place he says, *Apol.*II.6 :—

> For he became also man, as we have said before, having been born according to the counsel of God the Father, on behalf of believing men and for the destruction of demons. And you are now able to perceive this from the things taking place before your eyes. For there are many possessed by demons throughout the whole world, and in your own city, whom many of our own people, the Christians, exorcising by the name of Jesus Christ, who was crucified under Pontius Pilate, have cured and still do cure, subduing and expelling the demons possessing them, though they never were cured by all the other exorcists and dealers in incantations and charms.

But in the latter end of the third century the exorcists began to be known as a separate Order of Clergy. Their appointment and office is thus described by the Fourth Council of Carthage, A.D. 399:—

> When an exorcist is ordained, he shall receive at the hands of the Bishop a book, wherein the forms of exorcising are written, the Bishop saying, 'Receive thou these, and commit them to memory, and have thou power to lay hands upon the possessed, whether they be baptized or only catechumens.'

And many are the stories, which we may read in the records of the Church in different ages, of supposed demoniacal possession, sometimes of their cure, more frequently of diabolical punishments, inflicted by priestly power, combined with popular ignorance, upon the unhappy victims of these absurd accusations.

Let us open, for instance, the works of Bishop Hall, of comparatively recent date, for he died in the year 1656,—a most excellent Christian, if ever there was, whose devout 'Contemplations,' I doubt not, will be familiar to many of you. And let us hear what he has to say on the subject of demons.

> How formidable is the number of these evil and hostile spirits! Had we the eyes of that holy hermit,—for such [that is, holy] the first [hermits] were,—we might see the air full of these malignant spirits, laying snares for miserable mankind. And, if the

possessors of one poor demoniac could style themselves Legion, a name that, in the truest account, contains no less than ten cohorts, and every cohort fifty companies, and every company twenty-five soldiers, to the number of one thousand two hundred and twenty-five—[the Roman legion contained properly 6,000 soldiers]—what an army of these hellish fiends do we suppose is that, wherewith whole mankind is beleagured, all the world over! *Works*, viii.398.

Truly, this glorious and blessed world, in which our Father has placed us, would be a fearful place to live in, if this account were true. We might find abundant excuses for sin, if this was really our condition: we might well marvel how it should be possible for any but a very few to reach their Father's home in safety, if indeed we were exposed to such assaults as these. Bishop Hall, however, though he thoroughly believed in demoniacal possession, considers that exorcism, except by the power of fervent prayer, is at an end,—is, in fact, 'unjustifiable'—though still 'challenged and practised by some, who lay no small claim to holiness.' But then, he says:—

Yet with how much difference from the apostolic practice and issue! With them of old, there was no more but a word of command, and an instant ejection: here, what a world of business! what sprinkling! what censing! what blessings of herbs and other ingredients of suffumigation! what variety of direful ceremonies! and, when all is done, the success shuts up no otherwise, than in just suspicion or censure! What a difference then there is of times and means! At the first, it was a greater work to dispossess devils by prayer and fasting, than by command: now, it were far greater to do it by a mere command, than by prayer and fasting. That, which was then ordinarily done, were now strangely miraculous; and that, which is in the ordinary course now, was then rare and unusual. The power of an adjuring command, we see, ceased; the power of fervent prayer can never be out of date.

This, and this only, is the remedy of both bodily and mental possession: thus, if we will *resist the devil, he*

> *shall flee away* from us. Upon the ground of this scripture it was, as myself was witness, that in our age a godly and zealous preacher undertook, and accordingly, through the blessing of God upon his faithful devotion, performed, those famous ejectments of evil spirits, both at Nottingham and Lancashire, which exercised the press, and raised no small envy from the gainsayers. viii.p.413,414.

To what a very small extent, however, the judgment of this excellent Bishop can be credited in such matters, even when speaking of things which he himself saw, may be indicated by the fact that he has also written such passages as these.

> That there have been diseases remedied, wounds healed, blood staunched, thorns pulled out, serpents stupified, *winds procured*, by *charms*, is so notorious, that, whoso would doubt of it, should make himself a wonder of incredulity . . . . Needs must it therefore be by devilish operation, whose agents witches and sorcerers are, and whose means of working are the superstitious inventions, which by a secret compact receive their force and success from those infernal powers. viii.412.

Again he says, viii.407 :—

> The times are not past the ken of our memory, since the frequent, and *in some part, true* reports of those familiar devils, fairies, and goblins, wherewith many places were commonly haunted,—the rarity whereof in these latter times is sufficient to descry the difference betwixt the state of ignorant superstition and the clearer light of the Gospel. I doubt not that there were many frauds intermixed, both in the acting and relating divers of these occurrences: but he, that shall detract from the truth of all, may as well deny there were men living in those ages before us. Neither can I make question of the authentic records of the examinations and confessions of the witches and sorcerers, in several regions of the world, agreeing in the truth of their horrible pacts with Satan, of their set meetings with evil spirits, their beastly hom-

ages and conversations. I should hate to be guilty of so much incredulity, as to charge so many grave judges and credible historians with lies.

Then he goes on, as he says, 'amongst such fastidious choice of whole dry-fats of voluminous relations,' to 'single out that one famous story of Magdalen de la Croix, in the year of our Lord Christ, 1545'; and he gravely tells us how at the age of five years, 'an evil spirit presented himself to her, in the form of a blackmoor, foul and hideous.'

She startled at the sight, not without much horror; but with fair speeches and promises of all those gay toys, wherewith children are wont to be delighted, she was wont to have society with him, not without strong charges of silence and secrecy. . . . No sooner was she come to the age of 12 or 13 years, than the Devil solicits her to marry with him, and for her dowry promises her, that for the space of 30 years she shall live in such fame and honour, for the opinion of her sanctity, as that she shall be for that time the wonder of all Spain.

Meanwhile, he says, 'this wicked spirit'—

delegates another of his hellish complices to supply the place and form of his Magdalen, in the church, in the cloister, in all their meetings, not without marvellous appearances of gravity and devotion, disclosing unto her also the affairs of the world abroad, and furnishing her with such advertisements, as made her wondered at, and won her the reputation not only of a holy virgin, but of a prophetess.

At last she is elected abbess, and then indeed, he says—

Wonderful were the feats which she did! The priest cries out in his celebration, that he missed one of the holy host, which he had consecrated; and lo, that was by her wonted angel invisibly conveyed to holy Magdalen. The wall that was betwixt her lodging and the quire, at the elevation of the host, clave asunder, that holy Magdalen might see that sacred act. And, which was yet more notorious on solemn festivals, when the nuns made their procession,

> Magdalen was in the sight of the beholders lift up from the earth the height of three cubits, as if she should have been rapt up to heaven; and sometimes, while she bore in her arms a little image of the child Jesus, new-born and naked, weeping, like a true Magdalen, abundantly over the babe, her hair seemed by miracle suddenly lengthened so low as to reach her ankles, for the covering of the naked child; which, so soon as she had laid aside that dear burden, returned suddenly to the wonted length.

And so the good Bishop goes on. You have heard me quote not long ago Jerome's account of the monk Antony and the demon-forms which appeared to him in the desert. But here you have a pious Protestant Bishop of the 17th century—and an able and learned one too—relating in all sober seriousness this ineffable nonsense, and assuring us moreover that this is—

> a story of great note and use for many occasions, and too well-known to the world to admit of either denial or doubt, and ratified, as by the known consent of the time, so by the faithful records of—[four different writers whom he names]. Lord God! what cunning conveyances are here of the foul spirit! what subtle hypocrisy! what powerful illusions! enough to make sanctity itself suspected, enough to shame the pretence of miracles. He can, for advantage, be a holy man, as well as an ugly Moor: he can be as devout at Matins, Sacraments, Processions, as the best: what wonder when he can at pleasure counterfeit an Angel of Light? In that glorious form did he appear to Simon Stylites of old, to Gertrude of Westphalia, not without the entertainment of her joy and devotion, &c.

Even such delusions, possessing fully the mind of one of the best men of his age, and doubtless of others like him, must have been a great evil, must seriously have corrupted the Christian doctrine which he taught his fellow-men, and impaired greatly his influence for the real good of their people, for their growth in the true spirit of God's children. With such examples, however, as this before us, we see how idle is the notion, which some have entertained,

that cases of possession by evil spirits were more common in the days of Christ than afterwards,—that, as the writer in the *Dictionary of the Bible* says, p.427—

> It was but natural that the power of evil should show itself, in more open and direct hostility than ever, in the age of our Lord and his Apostles, when its time was short. It was natural also that it should take the special form of possession, in an age of such unprecedented and brutal sensuality as that which preceded his coming, and continued till the leaven of Christianity was felt. Nor was it less natural that it should have died away gradually before the great direct, and still greater indirect, influence of Christ's kingdom.

The fact is that, so far from 'dying away,' the belief, at all events, in the reality of demoniacal possession increased more and more in the Church, and during the Middle Ages attained a frightful intensity; and indeed it has only been abolished in comparatively recent times, by the light thrown upon such questions by God's blessed gift of Modern Science.

But let the history of Christian Europe say how horrible have been the consequences, when such views have been followed out to their natural results, and when that dire belief in witchcraft and sorcery, which we know prevails among the Zulus round us, and which we desire and aim as best we can to eradicate, filled not long ago the whole of Christian Europe with misery, malignant hate, and crimes of the blackest dye, committed for the love of God, in the name of the pitiful, compassionate, Jesus. For, as Mr Lecky tells us in his recent work, even Luther could say, 'I would have no compassion on these witches, I would burn them all'; while, as he also tells us, 7,000 victims are said to have been burnt at Trèves, 600 by a single Bishop of Bamberg, 800 in one year in the diocese of Wurtzburg, 1,000 in the province of Como, 400 at Toulouse in a single execution, 500 in three months at Geneva, 48 at Constance, 80 at the little town of Valery in Savoy, 70 in Sweden; and a single judge, named Remy, boasted that he himself had been the means of putting to death, in 16 years, 800 witches.

But how is it possible to put an effectual end to these

superstitions, if we do not go to the fountain-head, and stop them there? What was it, which made Bishop Hall and other good men of that age such firm believers in demoniacal possession and Satanic appearances, but the fact that they received implicitly every narrative in the Bible as infallibly true—'every verse—every line—every word—every letter'—of it, as the Eternal Word of the Living God,—and because in their time God had not yet blessed the nations with that light of Science and of Criticism, which enables us to say, without a moment's hesitation, *this* principle at all events cannot be true? Yet even in our day, and with all the light of the present age around them, there are some who will still maintain this extravagant dogma. The Principal of St Aidan's College, Birkenhead, which as the Bishop of Winchester has lately stated—

> now contributes the twentieth part of the candidates for the whole English Church Ministry—

has said in a 'Manual,' designed for the use of his students:—

> The Bible cannot be less than verbally inspired. Every word, every syllable, every letter, is just what it would be, had God spoken from heaven without any human intervention. . . . Every scientific statement is infallibly accurate, all its history and narrations of every kind are without any inaccuracy. The words and phrases have a grammatical and philological accuracy, such as is possessed by no human composition.

But so, too, Dr C. Wordsworth writes, *Preface to Gr. Test.* p.xix,—

> It can never be granted that there are any, even the least, errors or inaccuracies in the New Testament.

And therefore Dr Wordsworth believes in the literal historical truth of the story of our Lord's Temptation, though, as we heard last Sunday, he passes over in absolute silence, both in Matthew and Luke, the question of the 'exceeding high mountain,' from which 'all the kingdoms of the world' could be seen, and the 'glory of them.'

But, if we in our day were to go forth to teach the heathen of this land, with John Wesley's word upon our lips, 'that to give up belief in witchcraft is to give up the Bible,' what hope could there be of freeing them from their ancient delusions,—what danger of continuing and deepening them,—even as we know that certain half-converted Christians of New Zealand have lately laid it down, that, according to the Law of Moses, adultery and witchcraft must be punished with death—for 'What was Divine then, must be Divine now'? But in so doing, how greatly should we be sinning against our heathen brother, and against our own souls also? What *right* have we, educated Englishmen of the 19th century—what an iniquity it would be for us—to go and teach to these natives, among whom our God has placed us, as truth to be received by them on pain of eternal woe, stories such as those of the Creation and the Deluge,—of Balaam's ass, or Jonah's whale,—or Satan's appearing in the courts of heaven, and speaking there good Hebrew with the Almighty, whom he taunts, as recorded in the Book of Job, —or many portions of the Gospel narratives, which we know, or might know, if we will take the pains to enquire, are some of them altogether unhistorical, and others, like the narrative to which the text refers, in any case but of doubtful authority—perhaps, no part at all of St Matthew's 'memoirs'—perhaps, only traditionary stories, recorded long after the death of the apostles?

For, if it is difficult to believe in the possession of a *human* being by a devil or a legion of devils,—if we never dream in our days of taking a sick person, a deaf and dumb person, a paralytic, a lunatic or madman, to an exorcist, but have recourse to the physician, or, if need be, to the asylum, showing therefore, by our actual daily practice what our faith is on this point,—still more inconceivable is that part of the story before us, whether morally or metaphysically considered, which speaks of the devils entering into the herd of swine, that is, into creatures not gifted with reason or spiritual powers. There is no doubt that in the Apostolic age the belief in evil spirits did prevail extensively, and all kinds of *natural*, as well as *mental* and *moral* disturbances, were ascribed to their influence. It was believed, to use again the words of

Bishop Hall, viii.400, that since he could not 'prevail in heaven,' the devil—

> pours out his tyranny, when he is suffered, on this inferior world,—one while fetching down fire from heaven, which the messenger called *the fire of God*, upon the flocks and shepherds of Job,—another while blustering to the air, with hurrying winds and furious tempests, breaking down the strongest towers, and turning up the stoutest oaks, tearing asunder the hardest rocks, and rending off the tops of the firmest mountains,—one while swelling up the raging sea to sudden inundations, another while causing the earth to totter and tremble under our feet.

We are not now likely to ascribe to Satan's influence the occurrence of an earthquake, a thunder-storm, an equinoctial gale, or even of a hurricane; nor should we suppose that bodily or mental diseases,—epilepsy, insanity, dumbness, deafness, or blindness,—were due to possession by an evil spirit. Yet the Jews in our Lord's time and afterwards, did this, so that in Matt.ix.32,33, we read—

> 'As they went out, behold, they brought to him a *dumb* man, possessed with a devil. And when the devil was cast out, the dumb spake.'

And so in Matt.xii.22 we are told—

> 'Then was brought unto him one possessed with a devil, *blind* and *dumb;* and he healed him, insomuch that the blind and dumb both spake and saw.'

Again, in Luke xiii.11, we read of a woman—

> 'who had a spirit of *infirmity* eighteen years, and was bowed together, and could in no wise lift up herself.

So also in Matt.xvii.15 the father says of his child,—

> 'Lord, have mercy on my son, for he is *lunatic*, and sore vexed; and ofttimes he falleth into the fire, and oft into the water :—

whereas in *v.*18 we read—

> 'And Jesus rebuked the *devil*, and he departed out of him; and the child was cured from that very hour;'

and Mark in the same case speaks of a '*dumb* spirit,' a '*dumb* and *deaf* spirit,' an 'unclean spirit,' ix.17,25,—Luke of an 'unclean spirit,'—ix.42, possessing the child.

And so the phrase, 'he hath a devil,' is used in the same connection, and apparently as having the same meaning, with 'he is mad,' as in Joh.x.20 :—

> 'And many of them said, He hath a devil and is mad: why hear ye him?'

In fact it is very noticeable, that, while in the first three Gospels cures of demoniacs are very frequently ascribed to Jesus, and he imparts to his disciples the power to 'cast out devils,' in the *fourth* Gospel no such cures are ascribed to him: only he himself is spoken of as 'having a devil,' that is probably 'being mad,' in several places, viii.48,49, x.20,21; and so in Luke vii.33, because John the Baptist 'neither ate nor drank,' but lived an ascetic, solitary life, the people said of him, 'he hath a devil,' meaning, doubtless, he is mad or crazy.

This demoniacal lore, or at least the beginning of it, the Jews appear to have brought back with them when they returned from Babylon; for we never read of any reference to the existence of a devil in any of those parts of the Bible, which were written before the Babylonish Captivity. The 'evil spirit,' which made Saul melancholy, 1S.xvi.14, was not a 'devil,' but is expressly described as 'an evil spirit from Jehovah'; and, as you are aware, the moving of David to number Israel, which in 2S.xxiv.1 is in like manner ascribed to Jehovah, is in the later book of Chronicles, 1Ch.xxi, ascribed to Satan. In the apocryphal book of Tobit, supposed to have been written about 350 B.C., we have the following account of an exorcism, viii.2,3 :

> And he took the ashes of the perfumes, and put the heart and liver of the fish thereupon, and made a smoke therewith. The which smell when the evil spirit had smelled, he fled into the uttermost parts of Egypt, and the angel bound him.

And, as the writer of the article on Demoniacs in the *Dictionary of the Bible* tells us, I.p.425,—

> In our Lord's time (as is seen, for example, constantly

> in Josephus) the belief in the possession of men by demons, who are either the souls of wicked men after death or evil angels, was thoroughly established among all the Jews, with the exception of the Sadducees alone.

Josephus, however, *Jewish War*, vii.6.3, says that—

> what are called demons, are the *spirits of wicked men*, that slip into the living, and kill them, if they meet with no help;

and so too Justin Martyr, Apol.I.18, speaks of—

> the men caught and thrown down by the *souls of the dead*, who are universally called 'possessed' and 'madmen.'

Among the Greeks, the expressions, 'to have a demon,' 'to have an evil demon,' were used as synonymous with melancholy, moody madness; and the great physician Hippocrates had in his day to combat the notion, that epilepsy was the effect of demoniacal influence. Xenophon also gives us a very interesting account of the 'demon' of Socrates,—how, while others said that they were influenced in acting or abstaining from any course of conduct by omens of various kinds, Socrates always said that 'the demon' signified to him what to do:—

> And many of his associates he advised to do this or not to do it, as by the intimation of the demon; and those benefited, who attended to his advice, while those, who neglected it, were afterwards sorry for it.

But this was a *good* 'demon,' and Socrates had here a glimpse of the Divine Truth, that we are all taught by the Spirit of God. 'The notion of evil demons' among the Greeks, says the writer in the *Dictionary of the Bible*, I.p. 424,—

> appears to have belonged to a later period, and to have been due both to Eastern influence, and to the clearer separation of the good and evil in men's thoughts of the supernatural.

From such notions, then, as prevailed among the Jews in the Apostolic age and after it, originated most probably

such narratives as that in the text, in the traditionary talk of the early Christians. We cannot indeed receive them as historically true. To do so in the light of the present day, would be to shut our eyes wilfully to those revelations of His Power and Wisdom and Goodness, which God has made known to us, and of which the Jews and Christians of old, the Prophets and Apostles, knew nothing. But they contain, notwithstanding, a most instructive lesson for us. They tell us very plainly what a deep and lasting impression our Lord's works and words must have made upon the men of that age, so that even, one or two generations afterwards, such acts as these should have been ascribed to him. They tell us of the *spiritual* power which he wielded, by which the blind received their sight, the lame walked, the lepers were cleansed, the deaf heard, while the poor had the gospel preached unto them. They tell us how there were those, who had long been 'bound with chains and in fetters' of sin,—who had lived disorderly, wild lives, apart from their brethren,—who had been the plague of their fellow-men, the terror of all that passed by that way,—and whose hard hearts were softened by the gentle word of Jesus, their stubborn wills subdued, their passions tamed, the madness of their souls allayed, —and they were seen ere long 'sitting at the feet of Jesus, clothed, and in their right mind.'

And miracles of this kind, as wonderful as any recorded in the Gospels, are still wrought by that Word of Power—that Word of Love—which Jesus speaks to us,—which tells us of our Father's house, of His care and concern for us, of His pitiful and tender mercies,—which bids a man look up to God Himself for help, to cast out the evil spirit that has long tormented him, that has made him lurk, conscience-stricken, as an unclean thing in all foul places, 'among the tombs,' or shrink away from the society of his fellow-men, 'into the wilderness,'—which says to each of us continually, whenever vexed and oppressed with the sense of our sins,—'crying and cutting ourselves with stones,'—cast out, as we may seem to be, from the presence of God and of Goodness,—

'They that be whole need not a physician, but they

that are sick. I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.'

'Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart; and ye shall find rest unto your souls.'

XXIII.

TEACHING NEEDED FOR THE TIMES.

PREACHED ON SUNDAY EVENING, FEB. 25, 1866, IN THE CATHEDRAL, MARITZBURG.

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1 Cor. viii. 11.

'THROUGH THY KNOWLEDGE SHALL THE WEAK BROTHER PERISH, FOR WHOM CHRIST DIED?'

It is a not uncommon saying among religious people that the critical study of the Scriptures, or the pursuit of those sciences, whose results conflict with traditionary views, are fraught with danger to the faith, especially of the uneducated, of the young, of the 'weak' of the flock; and those, who even allude to such subjects in speaking or writing, are not unfrequently warned of the destructive tendency of their words.

It is argued—and justly—that faith in God, the great support of moral rectitude, and the hope of heaven, the great consolation amidst the sorrows and disappointments of life, are more important, more precious, than any amount of information respecting the structure of the earth, the origin of the human race, the history and language of the past,—that multitudes may have—do exercise—a living trust in God, do calmly confide in his Love, and rejoice in the hope of His Glory, who are very little acquainted with matters of Science, who have never had the opportunity, nor are ever likely to have it, to study either Geology or Biblical Criticism,—and that to offer the results of the latter is no compensation for robbing humble souls of the comfort and support of the former. And so the fervently religious mind—more fervent than clear—conceiving that Science and Faith are irreconcileable, and concluding therefore that

the former must be false, but distrusting its own power of refuting what it implicitly condemns as sophistry,—looks naturally with indignation, and even contempt, upon those who seem to be invading the Sanctuary, to be lifting up impious hands against the Majesty Divine, to be traitors, in fact, not only to the system of the Church, but to Humanity itself.

It is impossible not to feel for such—for the fear, agitation, excitement from which they often suffer. We ought to do so, and to pardon them the sins, which their mistaken terrors may lead them to commit against ourselves. If they would suffer us, however, we would ask them to remember the words of Jesus addressed to his fiery disciples, when—

> 'he turned, and rebuked them, and said, Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of.'

Others, again, there are, to whom religion is not so real and personal a thing, who regard it merely as a useful, but temporary, means for promoting the good conduct of men and the welfare of society. Such as these will often look with coldness on any attempt to bring the discoveries of the day to bear upon religious questions, from a feeling, perhaps often unacknowledged to themselves, that the religion of the day answers its purpose for the present, and is destined to fall whenever its work is done. Amen! we say: let everything which is merely temporary in religion, everything which can be found to be false, fall away, when its time is come; for as Jesus said—

> 'Every plant, which my Heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up.'

But many think that the time is not yet come, when what is temporary shall fall by its own dead weight away, leaving what is everlastingly true for man in its naked glory. And such as these will sometimes express a fear, that all attempts to bring this on will only injure many; they will perhaps abandon all religion, when first convinced of the falsehood of much, which they have hitherto been taught to regard as an essential part of it; they may cast away the precious kernel with the husk. As our great living poet says:—

O thou that after toil and storm
Mayst seem to have reached a purer air,
Whose faith hath centre everywhere,
Nor cares to fix itself to form,—

Leave thou thy sister, when she prays,
Her early Heaven, her happy views;
Nor thou with shadowed hint confuse
A life that leads melodious days.

Indeed, we must acknowledge that light is not always equivalent to life,—that the former may be let in too suddenly on the weak or diseased eyeball,—that edification, building up in the faith, is the great function of the ministry of the Word,—that to be strong in faith is what we must desire for curselves and for our brethren. Yet, having said this, it yet remains that we should look out into this our day and generation, and see what means are now most likely to build up our fellow-men in the faith,—how, rather, we may save the most from falling into the yawning gulf of atheism, which gapes indeed for those, who are suddenly awakened from a dream of security, amongst the traditions which sheltered their childhood, and who, having taken all for granted, let go at once of all,—and of their 'birthright' too,—when part appears to be disproved.

It is no longer possible to keep our youth—our children—even our poor—in the shade of implicit belief in old authority. The light of God is shining, and penetrating into every corner. The part of true Faith is to come into the Light, knowing 'in Whom we have believed,' and cheering on the weaker with our confidence, that the foundation of our hope stands secure,—that God Is, 'though all that seems shall suffer shock,'—that He is 'a rewarder of them that *diligently seek* Him'—not of those, who fear to go out of their own little narrow bounds lest they should lose the sunshine of His Presence, as if that Presence were not enough to fill the Universe.

It is, as I have said, no longer possible to leave in abeyance the question of the nature and extent of the inspiration of our sacred Books. The subject is no longer whispered in corners; it is sounding through the length and breadth of the land. Conclusions, most unfavourable to Christianity in *any* form, have been—are being—adopted

by multitudes, especially amongst the mechanics in England, who have been left to form their own opinions by those who should have guided them, but who have given them no other alternative but *all* or *none*,—all 'that the Church believed in the first thousand years of her history,' all that is included between the two covers of the Book,—or else no sound of guidance, no voice of sympathy, from all the ages, from all the sacred Literature of the past, for the solitary spirit of man to fasten on,—no witness for God amongst men, unless the ass spoke in good Hebrew to Balaam, and Jonah composed a Psalm in the fish's belly. The fact is too palpable,—and lamented by many of the bishops,—that the clergy are no longer as a body what once they were, pre-eminently the *learned* class. Now-a-days, very frequently, although it ought not to be so, they are in general culture far behind an important portion of their flocks. If a belief in the essentials of religion is not to be imperilled in the minds of the laity,—in the minds of those among the laity who guide the rest, by virtue of the Divine ordinance of being able to do so,—the clergy must acknowledge—the clergy of a National Church must be *required* to acknowledge—whatever truth is become the common property of intelligent and thinking men; they have no right to endanger what is really precious, by representing it as connected indissolubly with what is no longer tenable. The standard must be raised for the clergy, instead of being lowered year by year. Far better would it be that clergy should be wanting,—that the duty of reading prayers or sermons should be discharged by intelligent laymen,—than that a host of inferior, illiterate men, should be admitted into the ministry, who are utterly incapable of appreciating their high calling, and ministering to the wants of the times.

But, if from the less educated portion of the clergy,—or from laymen of a lower rank of intellect,—or from those who, engrossed in active life, have not the time or the power or the learning for dealing with questions, which seem to them to shake the very foundations of the faith,—we might expect, we might excuse, a somewhat frantic terror,—what can be said for those of the more learned clergy, who deliberately offer their flocks the alternative of no God, no Christ, no Hope, if one single line of the Bible

can be shown to be unfaithful or untrue,—as one has lately declared in England, repeating substantially the language which he used three years ago? What can be said of those, who use such arguments as these, to deter men from looking at facts, which in these days in which we live must surely stare them in the face on every side? Have they, then, themselves no sounder, more solid, ground for believing in God, in His judgments, in His mercies, than such reasons only as enable them to accept all the Books of the Old and New Testament, each and everyone, as genuine and authentic? Surely, this is none other than bowing down to Baal, the popular idol, and forgetting Him who is Present at all places and all times in the hearts of His spiritual worshippers. O God, our God and Father! is Thine Infinite Being, then—are Thy glorious attributes—to be proved out of an ancient worm-eaten roll, and are they not written on 'fleshy tables of the heart?' 'Where two or three are gathered together in Thy Name,' art Thou not even now 'in the midst of them?'

But though not a few, it must be feared, of the clergy—and some even of the Chief Pastors—have failed in their duty in this respect in this our age,—there are many, very many, in every corner of the land, who have not bowed their knee to traditionary idols, who are waiting for a 'manifestation of the sons of God,' more clear and bright than yet has been,—who, strong in faith, and giving glory to God, are labouring on towards the Light, believing that all Light and all Life is from Him,—that he cannot deny Himself, nor deceive and betray the best desires of His creatures, which he Himself has quickened,—believing that the Glorious Gospel of the Blessed God—the Kingdom of His Father—of forgiveness, peace, and love—is not a dream, a 'cunningly-devised fable,'—convinced that it bears witness to its own truth and reality in the hearts of those who receive it,—being confident that, though the faith of its early teachers may have been mixed with superstition, with the ignorance of the age in which they lived, and though that ignorance and that superstition increased and gathered blackness through many succeeding ages, yet the essential truth, that which is really Eternal and Divine in their teaching, cannot possibly fail; by the breath of the Divine Spirit it has been breathed down to

us; nay, that same Divine Spirit is breathing in our hearts this day, is witnessing with our spirits that we are born of God.

I need hardly say that I have chosen my text this evening with reference to the subjects, which have chiefly occupied our thoughts of late, in this course of Cathedral Sermons. I have set before you many facts at variance with popular views, which you have been taught to regard as of the essence of religion. I have shown you that many statements, which are made with great positiveness by traditionary preachers, are unsound, untenable, and untrue. And it may be said—probably it has been said by some—'Yet, if these things are so, is it necessary to speak them in the ears of the multitude? For the man of learning—the man of science—the philosopher—such knowledge may be useful and good. For the unlearned and the ignorant—for the simple and wayfaring—for the child in age or the child in soul—may not these very revelations of the truth be a source of danger—a reason for their casting off the restraints of religion, for their falling into sin? And may not others—feeble souls—be perplexed and saddened?'

'Through thy knowledge shall the weak brother perish,
for whom Christ died?'

Let us stop this evening to consider together more closely this question, embracing in our view the discourses of the last three months, delivered by me from this pulpit.

(i) And here, first, I would reply to such a question as the above by saying that no evil need be feared for any, who are true of heart and pure in life, in pursuing any such inquiries as those in which we have been engaged, by the light which God is pleased to give us. 'Not that we loved Him, but that He loved us!'—that is the essence of the Gospel. It is not the clinging of the babe to its mother's neck, but the mother's fond embrace, that holds up the child, and keeps it from falling: it is not our zeal, our faith, our prayers, but our Father's Love that keeps us from evil, His Hand that sustains our steps, His Arm that defends us. But as the mother loves to feel the gentle pressure of the hand of her little-one, to feel its faint strugglings in answer to her own deep yearnings, so our God desires that we shall 'feel after Him that we may find

Him'—that we shall follow the Light, His Light, wherever it leads us—that we shall follow on trustfully, clinging to His Hand, and fearing no evil, for He is with us.

I repeat, then, that for all true hearts, there is no danger in these inquiries, for it is our duty to pursue them. There is a passage in the book of the Revelations, xxi.6,7, which says—

> '*He that overcometh* shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son.'

But the 'fearful and unbelieving' are ranked with 'idolaters and liars.' We cannot please God by shrinking back in unbelief from the work to which he calls all thinking men in the present day. To shrink from mere weakness —from feebleness of mind—from a conscious inferiority of mental powers,—which incapacitates us for judging, like ordinary men, upon matters of more than usual difficulty,—that is quite a different thing: our Father will not be displeased with those whom He has made weak, and who feel and acknowledge their weakness. But such persons will be meek and lowly: they will not sit in judgment on others, who take a different view of their duty: they will not be calling them heretics, unbelievers, infidels. For us, who recognize in all light which comes to us,—the light of Science as well as the light of Grace,—the gift of Him who is the Father of Lights, there can be no reason for fear or hesitation, if we are 'followers of that which is good,'—if we desire to know more of God and of His doings, of His Word and of His Works, in order that we may serve Him better, may glorify Him more, may grow more like Him.

(ii) But, secondly, I say that, if we would avoid the difficult questions of the age, we cannot do so,—we cannot be allowed to do so,—those, I mean, to whom God has given intellectual powers, sufficient to enable them to grapple with these questions. For these are not matters for men of Science alone to deal with. It is for *them* to search out the secrets of nature—to work out the results of criticism. But the main conclusions to which they have come, with respect to which they are generally agreed, become then the property of all intelligent minds of the age, and must, out of a sense of duty to Him whose prophets they are, be received and acted on. No one, for instance, of even the

most ordinary scientific education, now doubts that the world was not made in six days,—that it existed, with animal and vegetable, nay, and human life, upon it, long ages before the time fixed for the creation in the first chapters of Genesis,—that Adam could not possibly, in the garden of Eden, have—

> 'given names to all cattle, and to the fowl of the air, and to every beast of the field,'—

that thorns and thistles, and the pains of childbirth, have nothing whatever to do with the first man's sin,—that Noah could not have gathered food for all the creatures in the ark—

> 'of fowls after their kind, and of cattle after their kind, and of every creeping thing of the earth after his kind,'—

could not have provided twelve months' supplies of meat for the lion and the tiger, the hawk and the eagle, the vulture and the carrion-crow,—could not have laid in a store of lichen for the reindeer, of grubs for the woodpecker, or fed the ant-bear with its ants, the chameleon and the swallow with their flies, the night-hawk with moths, the sugar-bird with honey-dew. No one, in short, with the plainest facts of Geology before him, can suppose that the Deluge, as it is described in the Bible, ever really happened as an historical fact. The time is past for doubting and disputing about such matters as these,—except, of course, for those, who are either incapable of receiving the light of the present day, or who shrink from receiving it. And, this being the case, it is the plainest duty of the clergyman, who desires to 'build up' his flock, to build them up in the *truth*, as God Himself has been pleased to make it known to us; for only thus can he build them up in the *faith* of the One only True and Living God.

(iii) And, thirdly, is there not a precious meaning and use in these later revelations of the Blessed God to man? This is the next point we will notice. In former ages of the world, no doubt, it has pleased God to convey to us great spiritual blessings by the hands of men of the Jewish race, or rather of that great section of the human family to which the Jews belong,—which we still call the *Semitic*

race, though we no longer believe that they are derived from Shem, as the Bible states. Indeed, the famous chapter on the origin of nations, I mean the 10th of Genesis, expressly includes among the sons of Shem the people of *Elam* or Persia, whose language was *not* Semitic, and expressly excludes, as sons of *Ham*, the *Phœnicians* and *Canaanites*, who spoke the very same tongue substantially as the Hebrews themselves, and evidently must have had a common origin with them. It is true, however, as one has written (the Rev. F. W. Farrar, *On the Origin of Language*, p.196), that—

> The Semitic languages have been destined to exercise a stupendous influence over the religious thought of mankind. Almost unconscious of science and philosophy, this theocratic race has devoted itself to the expression of religious instincts and intuitions,—in one word, to the establishment of Monotheism. The three most widely spread and enduring forms of belief [the Jewish, Christian, and Mahometan] originated in the bosom of this family. They were essentially the people of God, and to them belong, *par excellence*, the psalm, and the proverb, and the prophecy,—the words of the wise, and their dark sayings upon the harp. Clear, but narrow, in their conceptions, marked by their subjective character, and capable of understanding unity, but not multiplicity, they lacked alike the lofty spiritualism of India and Germany, the keen sense of perfect beauty which was the legacy of Greece to the new Latin nations, and the profound yet delicate sensibility, which is the dominant mark of the Keltic peoples. And yet neither India nor Greece alone could have taught the world this great lesson, which was connected by the Semitic race with their most imperious instincts, that there is but one God, and that religion is something more than a relative conception. Destitute of that restless spirit of inquiry, which has led the sister-race to explore every nook of the universe and every secret of the mind, the highest attainment of Semitic research is to declare that *the increase of knowledge* is *the increase of sorrow*, and that the praise and service of God is the sole end and aim of life.

But we are a scion of the noble *Aryan* stem. The Sanskrit, the Persian, the Greek, the Roman, the Lithuanian, Sclavonic, Teutonic, Keltic, with all their numerous derivatives in direct descent, among the modern European languages, are all, as it has been said (Farrar, p.189),—

> daughters of a primeval form of language, which has now ceased to exist, but which was spoken by a yet-undivided race, at a period when Sanskrit and Greek had, as yet, only an implicit existence. . . . That the Sanskrit, the ancient language of India, the very existence of which was unknown to the Greeks and Romans before Alexander, and the sound of which had never reached an European ear till the close of the last century,—that this language should be a scion of the stem, whose branches overshadowed the civilized world of Europe, no one would have ventured to affirm before the rise of comparative philology. It was the generally received opinion that, if Greek, Latin, and German came from the East, they must be derived from the Hebrew,—an opinion for which, at the present day, not a single advocate could be found, while formerly to disbelieve it would have been tantamount to heresy. No authority could have been strong enough to persuade the Grecian army [of Alexander] that their gods and their hero-ancestors were the same as those of [their Indian foe], King Porus, or to convince the English soldier, that the same blood was running in his veins as in the veins of the dark Bengalese. And yet there is not an English jury now-a-days, which, after examining the hoary documents of language, would reject the claims of a common descent, and a legitimate relationship between Hindu, Greek, and Teuton. Many words still live in India and in England, that witnessed the first separation of the northern and southern Aryans,—[the *northern*, who travelled westward, towards Europe, from the regions of central Asia, where they first appeared, the *southern*, who passed southward, into the plains of Hindustan.] . . . There was a time, when the ancestors of the Kelts, the Germans, the Danes, the Greeks, the Italians, the

> Persians, the Hindus,—[and therefore also of the English, who combine elements derived from most of these]—were living beneath the same roof, separate from the ancestors of the Semitic and Turanian races.

We will receive, then, thankfully from our Hebrew brethren whatever has been committed in trust to them of the common inheritance of blessing for all mankind. But we are Aryans; and, when we hear the words of the Semitic philosopher, which stand recorded in the book of Ecclesiastes, i.18—

> 'In much wisdom is much grief, and he that increaseth knowledge increaseth sorrow'—

we answer, such 'grief' and 'sorrow' is good for a living man; such toil and labour is healthful and life-giving; in such 'sweat of the brow' shall we 'eat bread.' We cannot help our destiny: we cannot help that—

> restless spirit of inquiry, which leads us to explore every nook of the universe and every secret of the mind.

We must do, as well as they, our part in the world, as God wills us to do it, as He has made us capable of doing it, for the education of the race, and contribute those stores of knowledge, which we may be blessed to gain for the common stock, and which God intends for the benefit of all.

(iv) Then, fourthly, consider the terrible evils from which the light of Modern Science has already freed us, and still is daily helping to free us. On the one side, the idolatry of the Bible, which caused each line and letter to be received as the Infallible, Eternal, Word of God,—on the other, the power of the priesthood, based upon the ignorance and superstitious fears of the multitude,—have covered Christian Europe during many past centuries with 'lamentation, mourning, and woe.' Who that knows anything of the punishments for witchcraft and sorcery, which abounded in the middle ages, and were continued down to the last century (for a witch was burnt alive in Scotland so late as 1722),—who that has read any account of the massacres by Papists in Holland, the horrors of St Bartholomew's day, the fires of Smithfield,—nay, of the massacres by Protestants also, of the slaughter of Irish

Papists, of the burning of Servetus by Calvin, and the principles laid down by John Knox,—will not heartily and devoutly bless God, for that Divine Breath of Modern Science, which has dispersed already so much of the vapours of ignorance, and dissipated the bugbears and hobgoblins, with which a senseless or interested superstition had peopled them,—and for that Divine Light of Modern Christianity, in which we have been at last enabled to see that, not by the fires of persecution, not by the sword of civil authority, not by the thunders of Church anathemas and excommunications, but by the power of the simple 'Truth spoken in Love,' will God's work be done in the world,—to see that, in the words of a late eminent Divine (the Rev. Sydney Smith),—

> The true spirit is to search after God and for another life with lowliness of heart—to fling down no man's altar—to punish no man's prayer—to heap no penalties and no pains on those solemn supplications, which in divers tongues, and in varied forms, and in temples of a thousand shapes, but with one deep sense of human dependence, men pour forth to God.

For do not suppose, as has been too commonly taught, that persecution—most bloody persecution—for conscience' sake has only been practised by the Church of Rome. There never was a greater mistake. John Knox, the great reformer of Scotland—

> was led to proclaim it as God's truth, that the civil government lay under a sacred obligation to extirpate unsparingly the opinions and worship of the Roman-Catholics, and even to massacre the members of that communion, man, woman, and child, and that this was a duty so incumbent, that, in case of remissness by the magistrate, it devolved upon the people at large. Cox, *Sabbath-Laws*, &c., p.178.

Our own Protestant Queen, Elizabeth, put to death during her reign 204 Roman Catholics :—

> Fifteen of them were condemned for denying the Queen's supremacy, one hundred and twenty-six for the exercise of priestly functions, and the others for being reconciled to the Catholic faith, or for aiding

and assisting priests. In this list, no person is included who was executed for any plot real or imaginary, except eleven who suffered for the pretended plot of Rheims. . . The Catholics were frequently, during the reign of Elizabeth, tortured in the most dreadful manner. In order to extort answers from Father Campian, he was laid on the rack, and his limbs stretched a little, to show him, as his executioner termed it, what the rack was. He persisted in his refusal; then, for several days successively the torture was increased; and, on the last two occasions, he was so cruelly rent and torn, that he expected to expire under the torment. While under the rack, he called continually upon God. In the reign of the Protestant Edward VI., John Knell was burnt to death, and the year after, George Parry was burnt also. In 1575, two Protestants were burnt to death by Elizabeth. In 1589, under the same Queen, Lewis, a Protestant, was burnt to death at Norwich, where Francis Kett was also burnt for religious opinions in 1589, under the same great Queen,—who, in 1591, hanged the Protestant, Hacket, for heresy, in Cheapside, and put to death Greenwood, Barrow, and Penry, for being *Brownists*. Southwell, a Catholic, was racked ten times during the reign of this sister of Bloody Queen Mary. In 1592, Mrs Ward was hanged, drawn, and quartered, for assisting a Catholic Priest to escape in a box. Mrs Lyne suffered the same punishment for harbouring a priest; and in 1586 Mrs Clitheroe, who was accused of relieving a Priest, and refused to plead, was pressed to death in York Castle, a sharp stone being placed underneath her back.

I have been quoting from the deliberate statement of a Protestant Divine, the late Rev. Sydney Smith, Prebendary of St Paul's, who adds:—

Have not Protestants persecuted both Catholics and their fellow-Protestants, in Germany, Switzerland, Genoa, France, Holland, Sweden, and England? Look to the atrocious punishment of Leighton, under Laud, for writing against prelacy; first, his ear was cut off, then his nose slit, then the other ear cut off,

then whipped, and whipped again. Look to the horrible cruelties exercised by the Protestant Episcopalians on the Northern Presbyterians, in the reign of Charles II., of whom 8,000 are said to have perished in that persecution. . . . The Huguenots of France burnt churches and hung priests, wherever they found them. One of their own writers confesses that in the single province of Dauphiny they killed 220 priests and 112 friars. In the Low Countries, wherever the lieutenants of the Prince of Orange carried their arms, they uniformly put to death, and in cold blood, all the priests and religious men they could lay their hands on. The Protestant Servetus was put to death by the Protestants of Geneva for denying the doctrine of the Trinity, as the Protestant Gentilis was, on the same score, by those of Berne; add to these Felix Mans, Rotman, and Barnevald.

In truth, these persecutors 'knew not what spirit they were of.' Nor do those, in these days, who, when the faggot and the rack are out of date,—when they can no longer burn, or hang, or stone,—yet light up social fires of persecution, stab the characters of others with injurious charges and insinuations, and try to fasten upon them ignominious names, as 'heretics,' 'unbelievers,' 'infidels.' Nay, what the law will not allow in these days, a violent fanatical mob may perpetrate, urged on by their fears; for we know that within the last three years a miserable old Frenchman was hunted down as a wizard by the population of an English village in Essex, and mercilessly killed.

Surely it is a sad and discreditable fact that such a state of things should exist at this day in any parish of the land. Where a State Church has been established, with ample provisions for its clergy, so that religious teaching may be spread to every corner of the land,—where means are abundantly furnished by the liberality of Parliament, for bringing home to the cottages of the very poorest the first elements of an intelligent education,—it is monstrous that such mediæval ignorance and superstition should still prevail in any part of England. If such notions as those, which have led to these acts of intolerance, were really an essential part of the Christian system,—as for many centuries they were believed to be, by the most devout

men, as Judge Hale or Bishop Hall,—it were well indeed that the whole were swept away by the advancing wave of Modern Science. It were better to be still 'feeling after God' in the dark, 'if haply we might find Him,' than to believe in a Being, who requires to be appeased with human sacrifices, who can be pleased with the shrieks of drowning witches or of burning heretics.

But, thank God! it is not so. While the discoveries of Science have undoubtedly removed many of the old landmarks of theology, and will remove more, we stand upon the eternal Rock;—we know in ourselves—we feel—that, come what will, 'God IS, and is the rewarder of them that diligently seek Him.' As one has beautifully written—one who speaks so forcibly the thoughts of many hearts in these our days—

If e'er, when faith had fallen asleep,
I heard a voice 'believe no more,'
And heard an ever-breaking shore
That tumbled in the Godless deep,—

A warmth within the heart would melt
The freezing reason's colder part;
And, like a man in wrath, the heart
Stood up and answered, 'I have felt';

No! like a *child* in doubt and fear:
But that blind clamour made me wise;
Then was I as a child that cries,
But, crying, knows his father near;

And what I am beheld again
WHAT IS, and no man understands;
And out of darkness came the Hands
That reach thro' nature, moulding men.

Only in all our inquiries after Truth—in all our searchings after God—let that prayer also be ever breathed in our hearts:—

O Living Will, that shalt endure
When all that seems shall suffer shock!
Rise in the spiritual rock,
Flow thro' our deeds, and make them pure;

That we may lift from out of dust
A voice as unto Him that hears,
A cry above the conquered years,
To one that with us works, and trust,

With faith that comes of self-control,
The truths that never can be proved,
Until we close with all we loved,
And all we flow from, soul in soul.

XXIV.

ABRAHAM'S SACRIFICE.

A SERMON WRITTEN FOR CLAYBROOK SUNDAY SCHOOL, AND INTENDED TO BE PREACHED ON SUNDAY, SEPT. 11, 1864, AT CLAYBROOK, IN LEICESTERSHIRE.

GENESIS XXII. 1, 2.

'AND IT CAME TO PASS, AFTER THESE THINGS, THAT GOD DID TEMPT ABRAHAM, AND SAID UNTO HIM, ABRAHAM! AND HE SAID, BEHOLD! HERE I AM. AND HE SAID, TAKE NOW THY SON, THINE ONLY SON ISAAC, WHOM THOU LOVEST, AND GET THEE INTO THE LAND OF MORIAH: AND OFFER HIM THERE FOR A BURNT-OFFERING UPON ONE OF THE MOUNTAINS WHICH I WILL TELL THEE OF.'

In these days, and in this happy Christian land, we can scarcely form an idea of the gross and frightful forms of worship, which in other ages, and in other countries, have taken the place of that pure service of the heart and life, in spirit and in truth, which God, our God, requires at our hands. Among other rites, the horrible practice of human sacrifices was once very common in all parts of the world. All over Europe, the tribes which once occupied the regions, where now the most flourishing civilized nations dwell, were almost all in the habit of sacrificing human beings on great occasions. In Spain, in France, in Germany —I mean, in the countries now called by these names— the heathen forefathers of the present inhabitants were guilty of this. Nay, in our own British islands, it is believed, the same things were done; men, women, and children were shut up, we are told, in great wicker baskets, and burnt alive, as an act of religion. I need not tell you that in much later days men and women have been burnt alive, because of their holding different views on religion, by Roman Catholics, yes, and by Protestants also: and,

perhaps, the spirit of those times is not altogether dead in our own days. But these last were not exactly sacrifices, intended to please God, to obtain His favour, or turn away His displeasure. They were rather meant to be punishments—punishments for those who died, and warnings for those who still lived—as if God's Eternal Truth needed to be propped up in the world by such measures as these. Still, in those very same times, when these religious executions took place, about three hundred years ago, human sacrifices were continually offered by the Mexicans in North America: and many Spanish soldiers, who were caught as prisoners, were offered with ferocious cruelty, which I cannot here describe, in the very sight of their horror-stricken friends and fellow-countrymen, to the blood-stained god of Mexico. Nay, even at the present moment, human sacrifices are offered, we have too much reason to believe—as they certainly were within the last few years—in one district of British India, under the rule of our Queen. We have not yet been able to root out this practice, or to put a stop to the dreadful scenes, which have taken place, as the newspapers have told us, so late as July 6 in this very year, at the great Hindoo Feast of Juggernaut, when, three victims, at least,—two men, and one woman,—threw themselves in mad devotion under the car of the idol-god, and were crushed to death beneath its ponderous wheels.

Strange and sad is this terrible delusion, which has so long and so widely prevailed among the human race. It is believed that among the Zulus in Zululand, beyond the borders of my diocese, human victims are, on certain occasions, either killed or buried alive. And we know this to be the case in other parts of Africa, as among the people of Dahomey, where attempts have been made lately by British officers to stop this barbarous practice: but the answer was returned, 'The customs must be observed, or the country would suffer.' But these are mere savages. The *most civilized* nations of old—the Greeks and Romans—in ancient times very frequently offered sacrifices of this kind. The Persians buried people alive for this purpose: the Egyptians, at one time, sacrificed daily three human beings. The Phœnicians had their idol Moloch, made into the form of a huge metal statue with the head of a bull. A fire was kindled inside, which turned the body of the idol into an

oven. The long arms were stretched out in front, and upon the hands was laid the young child that was brought to be offered: and then, by some secret mechanism, the horrible arms were lifted up, and the helpless little one flung full into the roaring flames.

I have mentioned these facts, my brethren, because they illustrate the state of things which, most probably, existed among the Israelites, when the words of my text were written. We read of the nations who once lived in the land of Israel, Jer.xxxii.35, that

> 'they caused their sons and daughters to pass through to Moloch,' *i.e.* they dedicated them, gave them up, sacrificed them to Moloch: nay, it is plainly said, D.xii.31,
>
> 'Even their sons and their daughters they have burnt in the fire to their gods.'

And so are we told of the King of Moab, 2K.iii.27, that, in his time of distress,

> 'He took his eldest son, that should have reigned in his stead, and offered him up for a burnt-offering upon the wall,'

and of the people who were placed in Samaria, 2K.xvii.31, that they

> 'burnt their children in fire to Adrammelech, and Anammelech, the gods of Sepharvaim.'

But this is not all. For, shocking as it may seem, it is only too true that the Israelites themselves, though with prophets preaching God's word in the midst of them, were as guilty as their neighbours in this respect, as in many others. They, too, offered their children burnt-offerings to Moloch—having learned the practice, most probably, from the Phœnicians or Canaanites, among whom they dwelt. And it may be that they also had some such a dreadful brazen statue of Moloch set up in their land—in the valley of Hinnom, hard by the city of Jerusalem, if not in the very temple itself. Hear, for instance, what the prophet Jeremiah says, vii.30,31, of the Jews in his time:

> 'The children of Judah have done evil in my sight, saith Jehovah: they have set their abominations in the House which is called by my name to pollute it. And they have built the high places of Tophet, which is in the valley of the son of Hinnom, *to burn their sons and their daughters in the fire.*'

And again he writes, xix.5,

'They have built also the high places of Baal, to burn their sons with fire for burnt-offerings unto Baal.'

And the Psalmist says, cvi.37,38,

'Yea, they sacrificed their sons and their daughters unto devils, and shed innocent blood, the blood of their sons and their daughters, whom they sacrificed unto the idols of Canaan, and the land was polluted with blood.'

And Ezekiel says, xvi.20,

'Moreover thou hast taken thy sons and thy daughters, whom thou hast borne unto me, and these hast thou sacrificed unto them to be devoured:'

and again, xxiii.39,

'For, when they had slain their children to their idols, then they came the same day into my sanctuary to profane it; and lo, thus have they done in the midst of mine house.'

From all this you will see that the practice of offering human sacrifices was, indeed, very common amongst the Jews in the lifetime of the prophets Jeremiah and Ezekiel, that is, about the time of the Captivity and after it, and also in those yet earlier days, when King Manasseh, and before him, King Ahaz, 'made their sons to pass through the fire,' 2K.xxi.6,xvi.3. And so, too, we read of David giving seven sons of Saul to be '*hung before the Lord*,' 2S.xxi.6,9—of Samuel hewing Agag, the captive king of the Amalekites, 'in pieces *before the Lord*,' 1S.xv.33,—and of Jephthah the Gileadite offering his only child, a daughter, as a burnt-offering *unto the Lord*, on his return home from a great victory, Ju.xi.30,31,34—40. And this last fact is mentioned by the sacred writer without any word of comment upon it, to mark it as something unnatural and horrible: he quietly recounts the story, as if the sacrifice of a human being was in those days no extraordinary occurrence. He tells us that

'Jephthah vowed a vow unto the Lord, and said, If thou shalt without fail deliver the children of Ammon into mine hands, then it shall be, that whatsoever cometh forth of the doors of my house to meet me, when I return in peace from the children of Ammon, shall surely be the Lord's, and *I will offer it up for a burnt-offering*.'

If it had been a male or female slave that had thus come

forth, the first to greet the master on his return, the sacrifice would have been made, and, most probably, no notice would have been taken of it, except, perhaps, simply to record the fact. But it was his daughter, who 'came out to meet him with timbrels and with dances: and she was his only child; beside her he had neither son nor daughter. And it came to pass, when he saw her, that he rent his clothes, and said, 'Alas! my daughter! thou hast brought me very low, and thou art one of them that trouble me; for I have opened my mouth unto the Lord, and I cannot go back.' And she said unto him, 'My father, if thou hast opened thy mouth unto the Lord, do to me according to that which hath proceeded out of thy mouth; forasmuch as the Lord hath taken vengeance for thee of thine enemies, even of the children of Ammon.' And she said unto her father, 'Let this thing be done for me; let me alone two months, that I may go up and down upon the mountains, and bewail my virginity, I and my fellows.' And he said, 'Go.' And he sent her away for two months: and she went with her companions and bewailed her virginity upon the mountains. And it came to pass at the end of two months, that she returned unto her father, who '*did with her according to his vow which he had vowed*'—that is, 'offered her up as a burnt-offering,'—and she knew no man. And it was a custom in Israel that the daughters of Israel went yearly to lament the daughter of Jephthah the Gileadite four days in a year.'

You will now be able to understand more clearly the meaning of the passage which I have taken for my text, and the lessons which we are to draw from the story here set before us out of the lifetime of the patriarch Abraham. This chapter seems to explain the great struggle of mind, through which good men of old had to pass, before they came at last to abolish this horrible practice of human sacrifice. You may have often wondered, when you heard it read, that so good a man as Abraham should have ever thought that he could please God by slaying his son, and offering him up as a burnt-offering. And you must have been still more surprised to hear it said that 'God did tempt Abraham,' by giving him a direct command to do this—to do what the laws of God and man, as well as the strongest instincts of parental love, most positively and

utterly forbid. How far this story is literally true, and describes what really happened in the life of Abraham, we cannot say. When our Lord in His parable speaks of the rich man and Lazarus—of one being in Abraham's bosom, and the other far off in torments, with a great gulf fixed between them—and of the rich man and Abraham talking with one another across this great gulf—we do not suppose that He meant his hearers to receive these statements as literally true, as describing actual matters of fact. But He framed a story in this form, and put it before them, so that it might attract their notice, and fix itself upon their minds, and they might draw out of it by meditation the deep lessons of truth which He meant to convey in it. And so it may be here. The writer of this chapter lived, no doubt, in an age when men, even pious men, such as David, thought that they could please God by hanging up innocent men 'before the Lord' for the faults of their fathers,—nay, when one like Jephthah could feel himself so bound by a vow, that he must needs offer up his own darling child as a burnt-offering to Jehovah. And this writer's heart was stirred by the Divine Spirit to testify against such practices, as no part of the worship which God desired at men's hands. To him in his own soul had been already revealed the great truth that 'God is a Spirit,' and they, that would worship Him rightly, must 'worship Him in spirit and in truth'—in faith, and love, and purity, and righteousness of life, not by costly gifts or sacrifices, still less by the blood and burnt flesh of human beings. This is just what the prophet Micah says in a certain place, vi.6—8:

> 'Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the high God? Shall I come before him with burnt-offerings, with calves of a year old? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?'

Nay! he seems to say; none of these things will please God—none of these sacrifices are such as His soul desires.

> 'He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?'

Some such a prophet as Micah, then—some earlier prophet—may have been moved by Divine Inspiration—may have had it put into his heart, as we say—to write this chapter in Genesis, in order to teach his people, in a striking, practical way, this very same lesson. He describes an occurrence in the life of their great forefather Abraham: whether it ever really happened or not, exactly as is here described, does not at all matter for the lessons which may be drawn from it. Certain we are, at all events, that God never tempted Abraham with any such a command as this; for we know well, what St James says, i.13,

> 'Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God; for God cannot be tempted of evil, neither tempteth He any man.'

What the writer really means, when he says that 'God did tempt Abraham' by giving him such a command, is most probably this—that the thought arose in Abraham's heart—in the main a good, pious thought, and, therefore, *so far* inspired by God's Spirit—that he must hold back nothing from God which God required of him—that he must be ready to surrender, at all times, in all things, his will to God's — to put implicit faith in God's promises —to yield a cheerful obedience to God's commands. All this was good; and such thoughts as these, whether present in our hearts or in his, must come from God: they are God's inspiration, the work of God's own Spirit within us. But Abraham's mistake—at least the mistake ascribed to him in this story—was that of supposing that this particular act was commanded by God—that God really wished him to kill his son, and sacrifice him, as a sign of his obedience, faith, and love—that it was God's Voice which spake to him, 'Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt-offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of.' Here was a confusion of the right impulse and the wrong—of the Divine Word, which spake in his heart, 'Love God and trust in Him—believe and obey Him—at all times, in all things—though he bid thee give up the dearest object of thy love—thy son, thine only son, whom thou lovest,' and the thought of his own human heart, 'I must do this thing now—I must

show my faith and love and obedience by this great sacrifice—by slaying my child, and offering him up a burnt-offering.' And so the writer represents this confused sense of duty in Abraham's heart, and the conflict of feelings arising from it, by saying, 'God did tempt Abraham.' This is the writer's way of expressing that strange movement in the mind of Abraham, which he wishes to describe. We are not bound, then, to receive this statement as literally true, any more than we are bound to believe that what we read in 2S.xxiv.1 is literally true, viz. that 'the

> anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel, and He,'—that is, *the Lord*,—'moved David against them to say, Go, number Israel and Judah;'

whereas, in 1Ch.xxi.1, we are told that

> '*Satan* stood up against Israel, and provoked David to number Israel.'

In all these cases, the writer is expressing, as well as he can, in his own human language, from his own point of view, what appears to him to be the nature of the act which he is describing.

So, then, we are told by the writer in Genesis, Abraham, having been thus tempted—perhaps, as has been supposed, in a dream or vision of the night—'rose up early in the morning,' and went his way dutifully, with his young son by his side, to the place appointed. You all know the story, which you have heard so often read in the Lessons of the Church,—how on the day he saw the place afar off—perhaps the famous table-mountain of Gerizim, visible from a distance, like a huge natural altar, to the whole country around—how he left his two servants with the ass, and took the wood of the burnt-offering, and laid it upon Isaac his son, and he took the fire in his hand, and a knife, and they went both of them together'—how they talked upon the way, and the child asked his father, 'My father, behold the fire and the wood: but where is the lamb?' and his father said, 'My son, God will provide Himself a lamb'—how they came to the place, and then Abraham built an altar, laid the wood in order, and bound Isaac his son, and laid him on the altar on the wood. 'And Abraham stretched forth his hand and took the knife, to slay his son.' And then, at that moment, says the story, an angel cried to him, 'Lay not thine hand upon the lad, neither do

thou anything unto him; for now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son, from me. And Abraham lifted up his eyes, and looked, and behold behind him a ram caught in a thicket by his horns! and Abraham went and took the ram, and offered him up for a burnt-offering in the stead of his son.' And Abraham is blessed, 'because he hath done this thing, and hath not withheld his son, his only son.'

In this narrative, then, the example of Abraham is set before us, as that of one ready to surrender all he held most dear to what he believed to be the Divine Command, and ready also to take God at His word, and trust God to the uttermost. Before this, he is represented as in faith obeying God's command, and leaving his own land, the land of his birth, for a strange land, the land of promise, —'going out, not knowing whither he went.' Then he is described as hoping against hope, and so at length receiving the blessing, the son of his old age, Isaac, the heir of the promises, 'by whom all nations of the earth should be blessed.' And here once more he is set before us, as still exhibiting the same obedient faith, offering up, because he thought God willed it, his only-begotten son, of whom it was said that 'in Isaac shall thy seed be called,' —'accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead, from whence also, so to speak, he had received him.' And, doubtless, to the end of time, we, Christians, shall be taught to obey, believe, and love, after his example—the example of 'faithful Abraham.'

And now let us draw one or two lessons from this history.

(i) And here, first, we may learn the necessity, which is laid upon us, of obeying under all circumstances the voice of conscience,—of following the promptings of that inner sense of duty, which we all have, if we will only heed it, and which will urge us, from time to time, to do this or to do that—not because it is pleasant, or because it is profitable —but simply because it is right. This is, in fact, what makes a *man*—what makes him essentially different from the brutes that perish—that he has a conscience, a sense of right and wrong, an inward voice which bids him do this and do that, simply because it is right for him to do it. Many brute creatures are very strong and very clever:

many great men, who have natural gifts, and time and opportunities for inproving them, are very learned and very wise: but to do what is right and true and good, because it is right and true and good, belongs not to brutes, it belongs only to men; and it belongs to all men—to the humblest and poorest, to the young and old, to the simple and wise—to all of us, except those who may, by some defect of birth, be unable to think and act as men, and whom we leave confidently in their Maker's care, or to those who, by long continuance in what they know to be wrong, have more or less weakened and injured their moral powers, and degraded themselves beneath the glory of a man towards the level of the brutes.

You, then, my brethren, however poor you may be in this life's goods, may be rich in that which belongs to the Life Eternal. You may act up, if you will, to this mark—you may think and speak and do what you know or believe to be right. You may not merely avoid what is evil, but follow after that which is good, growing daily in likeness to the good and excellent of the earth in all ages, nay, growing daily more like unto God Himself, being followers of God as dear children.

Do I say that you can do this of yourselves? No! you cannot; neither you, nor I, nor any man, can live by our own life, or grow good by our own exertions, without the gift of God. Does the plant grow by itself alone,—by the living power which the Creator has imparted to the seed from which it sprung? Does it not need the rain, and the sunlight, and the soil, and the supplies from other sources, which God's great wisdom has provided for it, that so by its own living power—and that power itself the gift of God—it may draw in its nourishment from every side, and grow up thus to the glory of God? And so it is with us. We, too, have given us, from our birth-hour, as human beings, a living power, a germ of spiritual life—which is not our own, but is itself the gift of God—and by this living power we are meant to be drawing in, from day to day, from all things round us, supplies for our spiritual life. God sends us the Word of Life—living bread and living water—as He sees good, in a thousand ways of His wisdom, from the lips of a parent, friend, or pastor, in the words of the Bible or the Prayer-Book, or, it may be, in other books, and by

other methods, of His choosing. And He has given us the power to draw in for ourselves—as the plant draws in—from all things round us, life and refreshment and sustenance for our souls. Thus 'all things are of God;' and, whatever we have of good, whatever we are, it is His Spirit that worketh in us continually, to will and to do after His good pleasure. But, then, in order to be thus taught more and more of God, we must follow the teaching we have already received; in order to be led into more full light, we must walk in the light which now shines round us; in order to know more of God's Will, we must obey that Word which is even now speaking to us in the secrets of our hearts, and saying to each one of us, 'This is the path of right and duty, walk thou in it.' It was thus with faithful Abraham in the story before us. He heard, or believed that he heard, God's Voice in his heart, and he at once obeyed it, and in so obeying he was more fully blessed; he was taught a wisdom higher than any he had known before; he was made to see that not with such worship as this is God pleased—not with such painful sacrifices as these is the Holy and Blessed One, the Lord of Life, the Father of the spirits of all flesh, to be served,—but with the obedience of the heart, the ready willingness to surrender all—to withhold nothing—if God's service really at any time requires it.

I say, then, to you, my brethren, if we would please God, and do as Christ did, who left us an example that we should follow His steps, we must obey God's Voice, which we hear in our consciences, or which we believe we hear speaking within us. It is true that in our case, as in that of Abraham, that Voice of God speaking within us may often be confused with the poor, mistaken, utterances of our own fancy: we may think, as Abraham is here represented to have thought, that God wills us to do something—to make some sacrifice, or perform some action—which after all He has not commanded. Yet, if we verily believe that it is God's will that we should do it, we are bound to do it: it is right for *us*, whatever it may be for others, though, perhaps, as we set about the doing of it, we may be taught, as Abraham was, that God asks not this at our hands. It is in this constant habit of listening to God's Word, whenever and wherever we hear it—in the Bible or

out of the Bible, in the church or in the secret chamber, in talk with our fellow-men, or in the communing of our own souls with God—that the life of those consists, who are said in the Scriptures to 'walk with God.' Let us try, my brethren, to live and walk in this Spirit,—to know no will but God's Will, our Father's Will,—what we believe to be our duty before Him, doing with all our might, because it is our duty, because it is right, because it is the Will of our Father in Heaven. So living, we shall share the blessing of faithful Abraham, and of faithful souls in all ages; and, in the midst of all life's cares and troubles, God's Presence will be with us, God's Peace will be ours—the Peace which passes all understanding.

(ii) And, secondly, my brethren, we may be reminded by the text, that there really may be times in our lives when we shall be called to make sacrifices, yes, great sacrifices, and to make them cheerfully, for God's sake, in God's service. Not, indeed, in the way described in the text; such a trial of our faith can never be ours, though we may pity those who, in heathen lands, still think, as Jephthah did of old, that they must offer such sacrifices, as the token of their gratitude to the great God who gives them all things, or as the means of procuring His favour, or turning away His wrath. We must pity these our fellow-men, who know not yet the Name of Love which is revealed to us in the Gospel of Christ; and we must follow with loving, longing, prayerful hearts those missionaries, who go forth to preach the Word of Life among the heathen, and to teach all nations to look up to God and say, 'Our Father.' But yet to us, my brethren, as we pass along the path of life, may come, in some form or other, the Divine Command, to give up something very dear, because God wills it. And we must learn to do it, to do it cheerfully and willingly, as Abraham did,—to do it without murmuring, with a calm confiding trust in our Father's Love and in His Wisdom, that what He wills is surely good, what He orders must be for the best. Some of you, like Abraham of old, may have to leave your native land and the friends of your childhood, for some foreign far-off shore, where you will never more behold the faces you have loved, but amidst strange scenes and a strange people,—perhaps amidst wild, heathen people,—will have

to begin a new struggle for life under unknown difficulties. Or, what resembles more nearly the case before us in the text, perhaps, one or more of you may have to part, or may have parted already, with some dear child going out to foreign parts—a son or daughter settling in a distant colony, or a soldier carried to the war, or a sailor borne along the deep. And tidings may reach you—may have reached you already—that you will see your child no more in this world,—that the dear one you had cherished so long in your bosom rests now in the bosom of God. Nay, you may be called—as many are called—to give up your darling *now*, here in your native land, in your own village home,—to give up your child, at God's command—to give up one or more or all of them—into the hands of that dread messenger, who comes to claim them in His Name; and you must learn, my brethren, to bow in lowliness of heart, and say 'Thy Will be done!'

We must all learn to know and to confess, in such times of trial as these, that God has a right to claim our children from us, that we hold them but in trust for Him. We must believe also that, whatever may befall them, God cares for them and watches over them,—that, when they are taken from us, He cares for them still, and orders and appoints for them that which is best. We must believe, not only that He is 'loving unto every man,' and 'His tender mercies are over all His works,' but that that deep love, which we parents feel, is but a faint reflection of His great Love,—is *meant* to image forth to us, however faintly, that love of Him who is the Father of us all. 'He that planted the ear,' says the Psalmist, 'shall He not hear? He that formed the eye, shall He not see? He that teacheth man knowledge, shall He not know?' Ps.xciv.9, 10,—and we may add for our consolation, 'He that teacheth man to love, shall He not love?' Yes, truly, we must cling to the belief that 'He, who has planted in our breasts, as parents, dear love to our children—a love stronger than death—does by that very love of ours intend to shadow forth to us His own Eternal Love. *Our* love, we know, can take in every child of the family; *our* hearts can find a place for all: yes, and our love embraces also the far-off prodigal, in his miserable wanderings, no less surely and no less tenderly, than the dear obedient child that sits by

our side, rejoicing in the sweet delights of home. He that hath taught us to love our children in this way, how shall He not also love His children,—love us and love ours,—with a love in which the separate loves of earthly parents are blended, and find their full infinite expression,—the father's loving wisdom and firmness, to guide and counsel, and, if need be, to correct and chasten,—the mother's tender pity and compassion, that will draw near with sweet consolations, in each hour of sorrow and suffering, will sympathize with every grief and trial, will bow down to hear each shame-stricken confession, will be ready to receive the first broken words of penitence, and whisper the promise of forgiveness and peace.' Yes! let us think thus of God, our faithful Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier, the gracious Father and Friend of us all; and then we shall not be afraid to trust Him with our dear ones; we shall know that He loves them more than we do—more truly, more wisely—and that, if He is pleased to call them to Himself, it is well. When they leave this world they will be still with God: the same Gracious Presence will still be near them: that Love, of which all earthly loves are telling, will still embrace them—will order their portion, and appoint their place, in the world unseen beyond the grave. And, if they should still need the rod, my brethren—the rod of wholesome, fatherly correction—we shall be thankful still. He is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever: He will be the same Faithful Creator—the same merciful forgiving Father—the same righteous Judge, whose loving corrections are meant for our good—beyond the grave, as He is now. We may leave our dear ones—trustfully, thankfully, rejoicingly,—in His hands, for life and death, for time and for eternity.

(iii) But there is yet one other lesson we must draw from our text. Abraham, we see, was taught, that he was not to sacrifice his child as a burnt-offering—that, however earnestly he might desire to show his love to God, his grateful thanks to the bountiful Giver of all mercies, this was not the offering which God really desired of him; it was enough that he was willing to surrender his will to God's Will—that he would not withhold his son, his only son, from God's service and God's disposal. But what was he to do? How was he to show forth, in an acceptable

manner, his love, his faith, his obedience? We are told this in another passage, G.xviii.19, where the story represents Jehovah Himself as saying, 'I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment.' This, then, is what we must do to show our grateful thanks to God for all the blessings of our family life. We must train our children up for God; we must command them and our households to 'follow after us, to keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment.'

This requires, first, that we shall walk before them ourselves in the path of duty—that we shall give, in our own conduct, an example which they may follow,—that husband and wife shall be helpers—instead of hinderers, as they too often are—of each other's steps in the way of life, and fellow-workers together in rearing up their children as God's children. Living thus ourselves, we may hope to leave behind in their memories a recollection of the words which we have spoken, of the acts which we have done, which shall serve to cheer them and keep them right in many a difficult moment of their lives, with some such thoughts as these: 'My father, if he were living, would have had me do this;' 'My mother's heart would have been bitterly grieved, if she had thought that I could ever consent to this course of sin;' 'As I hope to see again the face of my dear parents, when this life is over, in the world of light, let me try now to live, as they taught me to live, as a brave Christian man or woman, fighting with all evil, without and within.' This, I say, must be one part of our work, if we would please God, so to live among our children—so to govern our households wisely, firmly, lovingly, prayerfully—that the remembrance of us may be sweet and precious, long after our bones have mingled with the dust. May they never have to think of scenes of degrading vice and horrible passions, when they think of us in after days, and recall in their memories the example which we set before them. May they never have bitterly to reproach us that, amidst our own guilty indulgences, we have let them grow up to shame and ruin, unchecked in sin, untaught in righteousness—that we have sacrificed them at the shrines of Baal, Belial, and Moloch, or, as Christian men of these days would say, have left them to

be the prey of the World, the Flesh, and the Devil. Rather may we have the comfort of saying to them on our death-beds, as St Paul said to the Philippian Christians, iv.8,9:

> 'Whatsoever things are honest, just, pure, lovely, of good report, if there be any virtue, if there be any praise—think on these things: those things, which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and *seen in me*, do; and the God of peace shall be with you.'

But this also implies that they will have not only 'seen' *in* us these things, but will have also 'received and heard' *from* us that teaching, which parents are solemnly commissioned of God to give to their families. Remember that in every family the father, or, in the father's room, the mother, is a priest of God. He has the high privilege conferred on him, of having to train up souls for God's work on earth, and for His glory hereafter: he has the grave duty laid upon him, the solemn responsibility, of acting as a steward for God in respect of this gift. And, brethren, we shall have, each one of us, to give an account of our stewardship. We cannot hope to escape the just judgment of God for our sins, if, either by our corrupt examples or by our criminal neglect, we suffer our children to grow up in sin—crooked and dwarfed, bearing no fruit for God or man, instead of being flourishing young plants of righteousness, that shall take our place, when the old trees are gone.

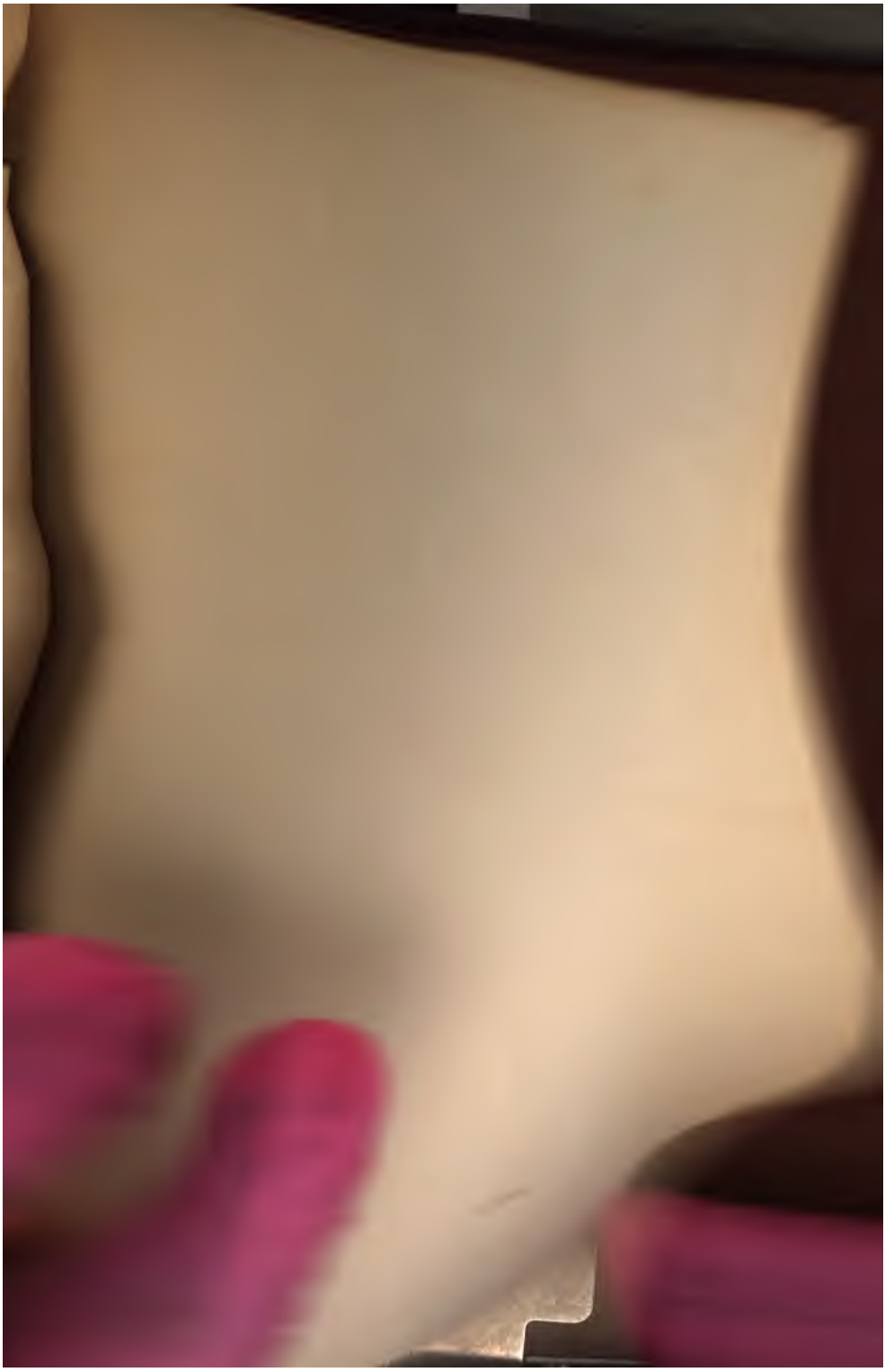
Some part of this work we can all do, and must do, if we would please God. However poor a man may be—however hard-worked—however ignorant—yet God has given him a power over his child's heart in its early days, which no other possesses. That awful gift, a parent's love, is given to help you in this very work—to help you to be earnest, patient, tender-hearted, persevering, in it—to enable you to speak home to the heart of your child, and reach the springs of life and affection within it. You can not only by your example teach them to speak the truth, to abstain from all cursing, lying, and swearing, to eschew all drunkenness and other vices, to be strictly honest and upright in your dealings with your fellow-men, to be kind and gentle, charitable and compassionate, forbearing and

forgiving. You can not only lead them to the House of God on Sundays, and, it may be, bow your knees in the midst of your family at home, morning and evening, to utter a simple prayer. But you can teach them to pray—to lisp, even with their infant lips, the first few words, by which they are taught to recognize that, above their father's and mother's love, there is a Love which is greater than all, which embraces all,—the Love of that Great Being, whom yet we may call, as our Lord Himself has taught us to do, 'Our Father in Heaven.' And you can check and reprove them in evil—not angrily and passionately—but with a calm, firm resolve, that, as far as in you lies, God's Name shall be hallowed, His Kingdom shall come, and His Will shall be done, within that family circle in which you rule—saying resolutely with one of old, 'As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.' And you can tell them also, from time to time, of what you know that is good and true and excellent in men around you: you can let your voice be always heard, on the side of what you believe to be right; and you can tell your children, when their time of trial comes, to do the same. All this you can do, my brethren—and more than this: you can pray daily for yourself, and them, that God's Holy Spirit will keep you faithful to the end in these duties, will grant you wisdom and strength according to your need, and will bless your poor labours to the present and eternal good of those you love.

But, perhaps, there are many of you, who can do little more than this—who have little time to bestow upon your children, and little learning with which to teach them. Some help God has given you in this necessity by providing you with a Parish Church and with a Pastor, whose duty it is to gather the lambs of the flock, as well as the sheep, into the fold of the Good Shepherd. But, specially, the School, for which I am this day to plead among you, is meant for this very end—to supply that care and instruction, which many cannot give themselves, and, but for the brotherly help of their fellow-men and fellow-Christians, could not procure, for their children. Thank God, my poorer brethren, who has put it into the hearts of others to establish this School, and to maintain it hitherto, from year to year, for this end: and do your best to profit by it, sending your children diligently to be taught, as you

have opportunity, and earnestly desiring that here they may be trained to 'keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment.' Nor need I, finally, remind you, my richer brethren, that, among the very last words recorded in the Gospel of St John, as uttered by our Lord, are these commands, by which He would test the love of His penitent disciple Peter, 'Feed my sheep—feed my lambs.'

THE END.

JOHN CHILDS AND SON, PRINTERS.

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